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The Strange Case of Eric Marotté

John Irving Pearce, Carle J. Blenner, Norman
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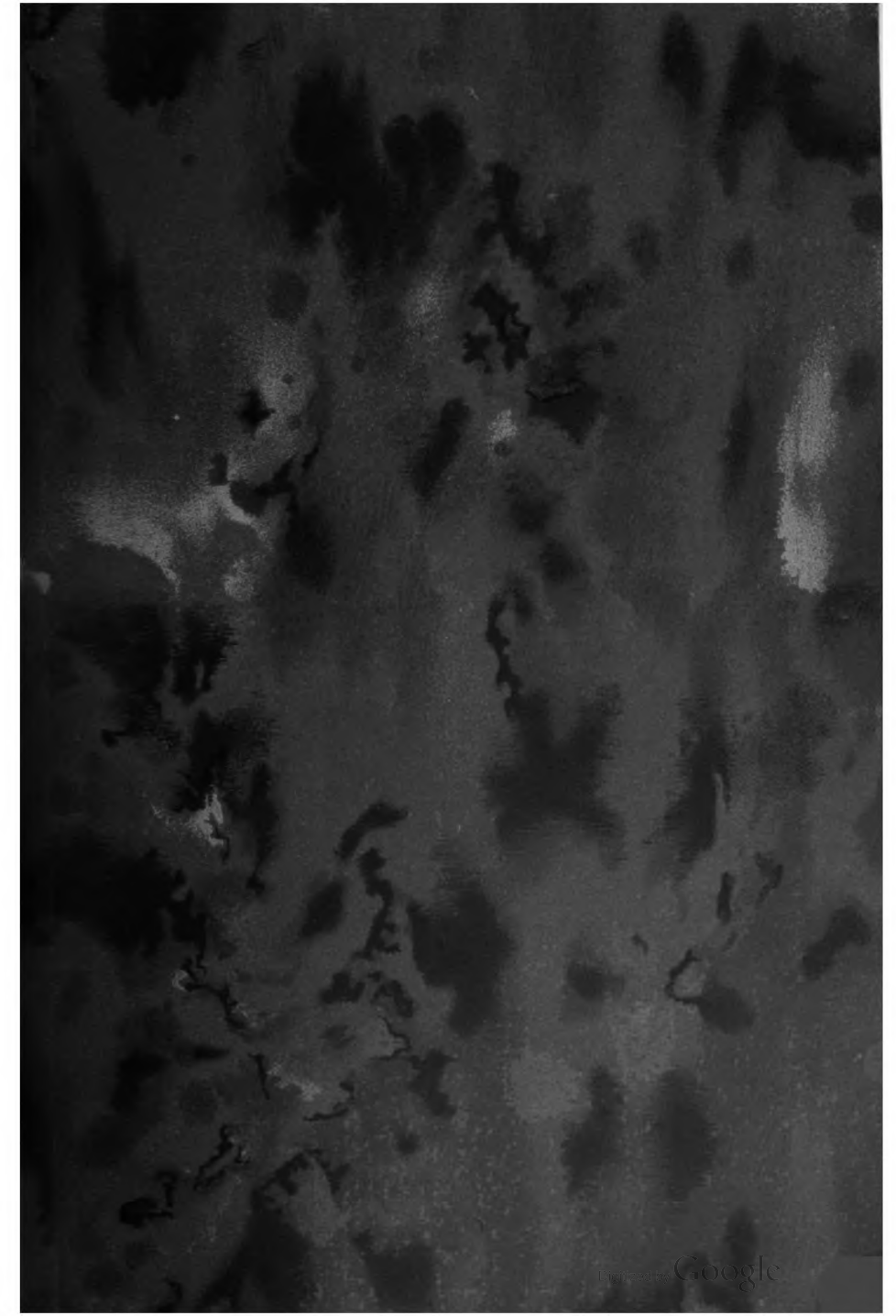
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**THE STRANGE CASE OF
ERIC MAROTTÉ**



WITCHEN

The Strange Case of Eric Marotté

A Modern-Historical Problem-Romance of Chicago

By

JOHN IRVING PEARCE, Jr.

AUTHOR OF "FROM WITHIN," "LAST DAYS OF LINCOLN,"
"HEART'S-EASE AND HAWTHORN; MYRTLE AND RUE,"
"LYRICAL SKETCHES," ETC.



FRONTISPIECE IN COLORS BY
CARL J. BLENNER

ILLUSTRATED BY
NORMAN TOLSON
AND NUMEROUS PHOTOGRAPHS

PUBLISHED AT CHICAGO
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***T**O that undying better part
Which sleeps in every human heart,
Till bid to wake, and hark and look,
I dedicate this human book.*

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CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE



PON a certain isolated street whose name is still considered too unimportant to be lettered upon the scattered lamp-posts that lend by night a semi-luminosity to its fore-shortened length;—darkly over-towered by the elevators, warehouses, breweries, tanneries, foundries, rolling mills, planing mills and other prosaic labor treadmills that give to "Goose Island," in the City of Chicago, a mercenary excuse for its existence, shunned as it is by all of nature's charms; there once stood a simple little brick cottage fit only for the lowly home of one who toiled with hardened hands.

Here where for the bird-songs and whirring wings and the various melodies of nature were substituted the constant rumbling of freight-cars, the swift, short flight of the switch-engines as they shunted and banged the full and empty box cars and "gondolas" to their proper stations and the whistle and swash of the infinitesimal tug-boats as they pulled and backed the leviathan vessels through the draws of the di-

lapidated bridges and into the slips of their temporary moorings; and where the sunny skies and balmy breezes of the fields and woodland had been metamorphosed by a cynical commercialism into an atmosphere hazy with never-ceasing smoke from restless chimneys, through which the sun itself could scarcely pierce, and an air redolent of tanbark, oil, brewery slops and river sewage made only more noxious to the nostrils by each gust of wind, that brought a cloud of whirling dust from the many industries instead of a blessed respite from the heat; here, this humble cot stood out in extravagant relief, a veritable oasis of cleanliness and verdure, flanked as it was by a miniature garden of immaculate green filled with a profusion of vegetables and old-fashioned flowers and half hidden behind luxuriant vines from which bright roses nodded their friendly and fragrant welcome to the unsuspecting passer-by.

To one who came suddenly upon it the effect was as startling as if a scintillating star had dropped abruptly from a cloudy sky.

The house, externally and internally, was spick and span with freshest paint and paper; not a board was loose or out of place in the whole length of the newly whitewashed fence that protected it on every side; the windows shone like polished diamonds; and each book,

each article of furniture, bedding, napery and tableware, gave evidence in its condition and methodical arrangement of a critical eye and an indefatigable energy wedded to tireless hands.

And this little "Paradise Regained" that put to shame its unaesthetic neighbors and lay like a gem of great price in a setting of rough, unfinished iron, was owned and beautified and occupied, not by an exiled artist, an eccentric scion of some highly cultured family, the managing official of some adjacent business concern, or even some proprietor of such concern himself; but, strangest of all, by two Negroes—one a stalwart man of thirty of jetty Ethiopian blackness; the other, his wife, an Octoroon of more tender years, whose graceful form and unusually pure Circassian-shaped features augmented a carriage and manner at once modest and refined, and whose height was barely exceeded by that of her husband.

Such a peculiar and astounding combination of personalities and environments would seem so to transcend all reason and experience, and the characters and events which grew about and led to and from them were so strikingly unconventional and pathetic and prolific of so much poetic justice, that the writer can not refrain from an endeavor to record them, simply and

truly, as they lived and came to pass,—sincere in his belief that the story of such unusual happenings to flesh and blood persons as this book relates, possesses, from the very fact of its fidelity to human nature, an additional interest for all who may read it.

One sultry evening towards the end of September in the year 188—, just as a loud, sharp steam-whistle announced the closing of the long day's monotonous drudgery in the numerous abodes of toil, and the thousands of grimy and dusty men and boys and clean girls and women began to pour forth from the doorways like bees from their hives, each one in silent pre-occupation or noisy exuberance as suited the individual disposition or circumstance; the single human stream from each direction rapidly merging into a larger and more general one along the main cross-town thoroughfares and then filtering out, little by little, on either side as each worker quitted the homogeneous throng to take his or her particular way to home and supper; a horse and wagon rounded the corner into the obscure street leading to this flower-bedecked cottage, and made rapidly towards its awaiting comforts.

The horse spurned the pavement with light hoofs and a high head, and a gait which bespoke the thoroughbred; but as he drew closer one be-

came conscious of a keen disappointment in his color, which was a pronounced shade of what is commonly called "dirty white,"—his otherwise beautiful appearance being marred by thousands of unsightly, brownish-black spots completely covering him from nose to tail.

The wagon was of the style once widely known as the "democrat wagon" and, though evidently but recently washed, showed the inevitable splashings of the implements and supplies of the whitewasher's and calciminer's trades, with which the body of the vehicle was filled.

Checking speed only long enough to clear smoothly the low curbing, the driver turned his horse from the street and continued on across an adjoining vacant lot, to the rear of the house, where lay a tiny frame barn and wagon-shed. Here he unhitched the horse and, after a few minutes spent in rubbing and bedding down and feeding him, gave him a friendly pat on the haunch, backed the wagon into the shed, locked both doors, and, followed by a muffled whinny from the nag, whose nose was deep in oats, passed with glad steps and a beaming face through the sweet-smelling garden to the kitchen door of the little house o'ershaded by a single immense, old willow tree.

And what a welcome he received! O ye

gentlemen of wealth and culture who let yourselves into your expensive and elaborate homes at eve with keys that open complicated, burglar-proof locks which hold the world at haughty arm's length, or are ushered in by obsequious butlers or simpering maids, to meet the querulous complaints, the thoughtless impatience or vast indifference of pampered wives and daughters; what would you not give to know and feel that you would be welcomed—and welcomed every night—not simply as a “good provider” or a necessary adjunct to some one ambitious woman's establishment, but lovingly met at the door in rain or shine, success or failure, by arms that sought your neck, lips that longed for the touch of yours and faces which blushed for very happiness at sight of you again—met with that intuitive prescience of your near approach, that quick step, and that unconscious eagerness to turn the handle of the door before your hand can reach it, which prove you welcome for *your self alone!*

And, ye young men of humbler station, yet who may still *aspire* to that monetary Elysium which dances like an *ignis fatuus* ever beyond you; how blessed be your lot if your wife or family so manage the household's affairs and so order her or their lives, that your daily change from working-place to home is not the

shedding of one species of worry for the putting on of another, but a transition from care to carelessness, from strain to reaction, from doubt to hope; so that every night is gratefully looked forward to as a constantly recurring and unfailing reward for patient effort, and you are not made to feel that you are expected to accomplish complete and final success *before* you can hope to indulge in any real happiness and regard at home!

CHAPTER II.

EARLY CHICAGO DAYS



O James Manning (or "Honest Jim," as he was generally called by both his employers and his employees as well as by his immediate neighbors) and his wife Jemima this cozy cottage home represented the savings of years of rigid economy and self-denial; and not until they had paid off the last penny of the original mortgage on it did they venture into the gradual outlay which had brought it to its present perfection, contenting themselves, up to that hour, with such improvements and embellishing as they could compass with their own strong arms and never-idle hands.

But, unique as was the result, the chronicle of the details of their struggles against the vicissitudes of fortune, of their frequent despairings and intermitted hopes, of their cruel rebuffs and unexpected helpings, all crowding one upon another but glorified and redeemed from prosaicism by their abounding faith in themselves and God; would savor too much of the common lot and of "the short and simple annals of the

poor'' to be of importance here. It is enough to say that in their case persistency and intelligence, an eagerness to learn and the humility to do well each succeeding necessary thing, be it never so small, menial or monotonous, that came to their hands to do, met with a bright final recompense, both mental and material, the which their well balanced minds and cheery temperaments and a fortunate freedom from illness enabled them to retain undimmed.

Born and raised in the South, the son of ex-slave parents, Jim had led the ordinary life of the pickaninny and the bare-footed negro boy, with nothing to particularly distinguish him from others of like color and conditions, until ten years, filled with the same evanescent sorrows and lightly invented, costless pleasures to which the childhood of the poor is heir the world over, had left their strengthening touches on his sturdy frame and awakening consciousness of strife upon his dawning mind.

Jim had attended, previous to this, such schools, and at such times, as the white authorities then permitted black children to enter and the necessity of helping towards his own support allowed, and being a fairly apt scholar and of an inquisitive turn of mind, could now read and cipher and had a smattering of the lower English branches. He knew the map of the

world and its different divisions of lands and waters, and had a somewhat hazy but workable idea of its countries and nations. Even this much, in that day of slow and painful "reconstruction," was by many of the Southern whites considered as "too damned much for a nigger to know." He had also acquired clandestine possession of a rather loose-leafed and battered, but, withal, still serviceable copy of a certain popular Southern school history of the United States, in which classic volume either the world came to an end in 1861, or else the history of the Civil War and the "lost cause" was glossed over, with the confident belief of the ostrich, which, when pursued, hides its head in the sands of the desert in the ingenuous belief that blinding himself must make equally blind his pursuers.

In this way Jim formed the innocent opinion that George Washington was quite a lofty character and wholly unmercenary, as a "real southern gentleman, sah!" should be. Of Lincoln he had, of course, heard many wonderful stories through his own downtrodden race, and he loved the memory of that God-like man. Over the aforesaid history and a discarded Northern biography of Lincoln, Jim often pored with rapt interest, and wondered that every one who read such works did not feel their charm as did he.

If Lincoln could know to-day what noble pleasure—what star-like incentive to unselfish ambition—the perusal of his life's story has given to his posterity, he would deem it his most exquisite appreciation. Many men have been great, but few have been both great and good. "God raiseth up in His own hour His banner bearers true, His wondrous work to do."

Now, why a Negro should bother his head about patriotism or the history of human greatness, when he had everything to lose and nothing to gain by their study, in that he must thereby become discontented with his own naturally humble sphere and vainly strive for another which his white-in-color-only neighbors held to be sacred to themselves and their descendants, is not easy to explain, except upon the theory that he was, possibly, human. So the Southron reader will have to remain in a certain measure of ignorance as to what practical sense actuated Jim and others of his caste in their desire to emulate in some way the great and good of whom they fitfully heard or read.

In Jim's case, he was, fortunately, too young to vote; so the local politicians, self-ordained scavengers of earthly hope—then as now—overlooked him and held no especial grudge against him for aspiring to become an "educated niggah, sah!" and vote the Republican ticket.

But, to proceed—in Jim's tenth year there came to him his first great grief and change in the death of his father and the emigration of his mother to the "Nawth"; there to seek among strange faces a fancied escape from the perpetual sad reminders of old scenes and familiar associations, and, incidentally, a more dependable subsistence for herself and child. To Jim the journey was a veritable trip through fairy-land, to whose charm his spirits responded with the joyous resiliency of expanding youth. After a day and two nights in the "Jim Crow" cars of the South and the day coach of a Northern railway, the twain arrived safely in Chicago, then a city of fatal architecture, flimsy buildings and bottomless streets; uncouth, unclean and undismayed.

Jim's mother being entirely willing to work, and a "perfectly good" cook and careful washer-woman, and being, moreover, both strong and saving—without the Southern Negroes' usual tendency to labor only three or four days in each week and then "play lady" or lie around drunk until their wages are gone—; had little trouble in gradually finding more and more patrons. Many of these who had heretofore had to put up with very indifferent work by irresponsible extra-helpers, appreciated her for her sterling worth and honest ability, and soon she

was never without employment. Living at home with Jim and working out by the day only, she received much higher pay than did servants hired by the month—generally a dollar and a half a day besides her noon meal—and she saved it. Expecting to suffer from actual want at first, in a part of the country new to her, she was prepared to wage resistless battle against fate; but such dire necessity never came, and she and her boy lived comfortably enough so far as their physical well-being was concerned.

Jim found ways to turn an occasional honest penny before and after school hours and during the long summer vacations, which were not enervating with stagnant heat like those of the South, and she did not take him away from his studies until he had graduated from common school, where the Northern Negroes had then, as they still have, the same identical opportunities for an education as the white children, and without segregation.

Though a woman of no education herself and born in slavery, she had followed, not only her husband's dying request, but her own inclination in carrying the burden so far alone, that their boy might reach at least this height of knowledge—practically denied him in the South—but beyond that she felt she could not go, and he must begin to act for himself thereafter.

Jim promptly decided it was time for him to go to work.

There are as yet so few trades or professions open to the Negro even in the North that to Jim the question of procuring employment was not so much a choice of many lines of occupation, as a shop to shop hunt for an opening in some one of the few in which the Negro's services are accepted; and, after many disappointing refusals, he was finally taken on as an apprentice by an old colored man who had followed for years the humble calling of calcimining and whitewashing contractor. As these "arts" are easily acquired, Jim soon mastered all his employer had to teach, and, adding plain painting as an auxiliary flourish, he one day invested the hard-won earnings of himself and mother in a modest horse and wagon and shop outfit of his own, and became an independent contractor. He never waited for work to come to him, but valiantly and thoroughly canvassed the city for it; and, as he always did a little more and a little better work than his contracts called for, he kept every customer once obtained, and the business grew till he was seldom disengaged and often had to employ assistants as the scope of his undertakings enlarged.

In the course of time his mother passed away, leaving him as an inheritance her blessing and

courageous example, together with the few hundreds of dollars which represented the result of her whole free-lifetime of simple industry and firm determination; and Jim was left wholly alone in the world.

He had never associated to any great extent with other Negroes, finding in the society of his cheerful mother and the companionship of books all the relaxation and amusement he required; and her departure left him almost a recluse, and awakened in him a natural desire for social intercourse with the outside world—and that of the black man being one of the most gregarious of races, bound together by the common ties of long years of former abject slavery, as yet unremote, and a community of color not to be denied, new acquaintances were readily formed and new friendships easily cemented. But habits of thoughtfulness and silent musing are not to be shaken off like a glove, and he would often, after the day's toil, wander the streets until far into the night, peopling its shadowy stillness with the bright visions and figures of his imagination and wondering over the probable lives and passions of the sleeping occupants of the darkened houses and of the few belated pedestrians whom he passed. The rude gallantry and adventurous spirit of some ancestor of a long-forgotten generation of Africans trans-

mitted through centuries of ostensible eclipse, reappeared in him in the mild atavism of these nocturnal rambles.

It was an ever-present obsession of his that, if Romance should ever touch with her magic wand his solitary, plebeian lot, she must come to him under the transporting moon, the starlit sky or the overcast heavens of some such night as those in which he walked alone with Nature and his own heart's speculations.

At the period of which I write, the principal Negro settlement of Chicago lay from State street west to the Chicago River's south branch and between Jackson and Twelfth street, where were domiciled also the very poorest of the foreign population, largely Irish, the other, diversified, nationalities not having immigrated to that city in any such numbers as they did later on. This district was also the "Ghetto" of that day, with numerous little Hebrew shops, many of the proprietors of which, or their descendants, are now among Chicago's leading merchants and manufacturers.

The remarkable transformation into its present aspect and conditions was due to three radical events. First, the Great Fire of 1871 burnt to the ground every building on the South side north of Harrison street and east of the river; then the second enormous conflagration, of 1874,

in itself one of the famous fires of modern times, starting almost at the line where that of 1871 left off on the south, cleaned out about everything of any consequence in the poverty-stricken neighborhood south of Harrison street and west of State to Twelfth street, before mentioned; and finally the railroads, seeing their opportunity thus thrust upon them by fate, bought out a vast number of the property owners there. And so the periodical removals and changing character of its resident population has gone on and on, till now a few Greeks, Italians and bums, the transients and the disreputables, are the only stragglers left—the latter class, by the way, having been banished in a body by an edict of the City Fathers to the Twenty-second street “red-light” district several years ago to make way for the entering wedge of the present great printing and office buildings which reduce its narrow streets to dark canyons of commerce.

The geographical line of demarcation between the rich and the poor, the educated and the ignorant, on what is known as the South Side of the city, was just as clearly and jealously drawn then as now; and, while everything west of State street was characteristic of poverty and depravity and the slums, Michigan and Wabash avenues (and later Prairie, Indiana and Calumet avenues) and the side streets east of State

street, were lined with the palatial homes of the then-established families and the *nouveau riche* of the time, even as far north as Randolph street. The Illinois Central Railway was practically out in the lake, its tracks laid on a break-water of piling, between which and the shore line east of Michigan avenue lay a long narrow basin much in vogue with those timid oarsmen who feared to attempt the rougher surface of the lake beyond. This basin was abruptly and completely filled up in 1872 by dumpings of the debris from the ruins of the Great Fire.

The Original Town of Chicago was built on a swamp. Before the down-town streets were raised and repaved and the buildings gradually jack-screwed up some twenty feet to the present datum, the road-beds were impassable in many places, with "No Bottom Here" signs stuck up on the dangerous spots.

Horses frequently went down to their bellies in the thick mud, and had to be extricated by placing timbers under them and prying them loose. As each building was raised, a temporary elevated board sidewalk was erected, in front of that particular building only, with wooden steps leading up to it from either side; so that a walk in any direction consisted of an irregular series of alternative ups and downs nearly doubling the distance traversed; but most of

the population was young and didn't mind the involuntary exercises entailed.

At the era here indicated, Thirty-ninth street on the south, Western avenue on the west and Fullerton avenue on the north, were the outward limits of the then incorporated city, recently extended; and public opinion was sarcastically skeptical of the likelihood of such immense and sparsely settled regions of farms, woods, swamps and cabbage patches as these far-flung boundaries encircled, ever being filled up with houses and inhabited by man. The "funny men" cracked jokes about it both on and off the stage and in the daily papers, and one particular enthusiast who ventured to prophesy that Chicago would grow to a population of a million souls during the lifetime of those present, was seriously believed to be insane.

What street cars then existed (and against which the livery stable men were all up in arms, saying they were ruining their business) were propelled by the festive horse or philosophical mule—temporarily superseded at one date by diminutive broncos in pairs—at a speed in winter, equivalent, on an average, to that of a good, swift walker. And in winter, too, the passengers were kept from freezing in the entirely unheated cars by covering their floors to the

depths of two feet with nice, clean hay (afterward utilized for horse-bedding) which they were at liberty to fight for and to wind about their pedal extremities to prevent frost-bites. It was no uncommon sight to see even men with shawls over their laps or around their shoulders, like travelers in the railway coaches in England and on the Continent; and those who were too poor, too proud, or too athletic to carry shawls, sat on their hands to keep them from numbing, and looked their envy at the ladies, who had but to transfer their wraps from their shoulders to their knees, and vice versa, to be in full feather for either riding or walking. Sometimes it was even too chilly for swearing; and the only place in which to seek the consoling warmth of a "smoke" was on the exposed front platform of the rocking ark, where one could listen to the more-calloused driver cursing his slipping and floundering "Bucephalus" and "Pegasus."

In the frequent heavy snow-storms of the cold weather a liberal supply of brooms and snow-shovels formed a part of the equipment of every car; and the men passengers were expected to, and did, get out and shovel a path for the horses whenever the car got snowbound in a drift, the conductor obligingly ceasing beating his arms across his chest long enough to

brush off the snow from their shoulders and boots as each of them re-entered the car. Upon which occasion their sedentary co-travelers received them with all the respect and admiration now accorded the sun-browned athlete with the golf-bag, and anxiously enquired of them how much further they thought the car could go before it struck another drift and the other fellows' turns would come to hop out and clear the track for the happy street car company. Though no heat was furnished of any kind by the local transit companies, of which there was one on each of the three sides of the river, no one, even when it was colder inside than outside the cars, ever thought of demanding that they put in car-stoves; but, when any victim became so numb as to be in real danger of "freezing stiff," he dropped off and walked or ran to start his blood in circulation again, catching his car further along when he felt better.

Oh! those were the good, old halcyon days —for Chicago's street railway magnates, God bless 'em!

All that remained in 1900 to link the memory with this glorious regime of past enterprise and public-spiritedness in our quasi-public corporations, was the nightly apparition, seen at about two A. M., of the mock-legal, abbreviated ghost-cars, those ghastly visitants from the grave-

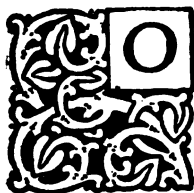
yard of greed that slowly glided and bumped over certain long-unused tracks of the downtown and a few other districts—lost and wandering haunts going from somewhere to nowhere and back again, collecting no fares, and carrying no passengers but their superannuated drivers and conductors, who were apparently so superstitious of the never-cleaned and cavernous vehicles that they never were seen to pass inside of them, but perched on the dilapidated, swaying platforms, fore and aft, through thunder and lightning, storm and hail, snow and heat, fair weather and foul, like gaunt, dark birds of ill-omen, guarding the sacred rights of the franchise lords—perhaps within the *letter* of the law, but far outside the pale of its spirit and meaning.

They were the Rip Van Winkles of transportation conveyances; as old and as wonderfully constructed as “the deacons celebrated one-hoss shay” and far more lasting.

Jim and, before her death, his mother were in, but not of, the Negro quarter; and in his aimless evening walks his innate love of the beautiful frequently led the former towards Lake Michigan with its ever-changing moods, and through the better residence portions of the South side.

CHAPTER III.

JIM AND JEMIMA



NE cheerless, bleak November night, when the pavements and sidewalks were slippery in the well-trodden places from the first heavy snowfall, which the quickly following cold north wind had congealed and held intact even in the traffic-filled streets of the city, and when the stars blinked softly in a cloud-tracked, moonless sky; Jim, walking along rather more briskly than was his wont, in order to breast the stinging blasts, passed northward and homeward along Wabash avenue. The hour was late and the street nearly deserted, those whom duty or pleasure called without, hurrying past unmindful of his presence, slipping on the ice, leaping through the drifts in an effort to land their feet in the holes made by earlier pedestrians (in which effort they generally and signally failed—to the delight of the lookers-on); and damning old Boreas and all his wintry tribe.

Nearing the corner of Eldridge court, Jim bent his head to the counter blast roaring up

from the lake, and, bracing his shoulders to the double assault of the storm king, broke for the crossing, on the run.

Just as he reached the farther corner, half blinded by the eddying, cutting snow and sleet, someone brushed past him going hurriedly towards the south, and, looking around quickly, he saw in the dim light the figure of a young girl. She was poorly and thinly clad, the wind now whirling her scanty skirts high above her knees and now blowing them tightly around her legs behind, where they sped her onward like a sail.

He had scarcely time to note the frightened movements of her body and her evident fear of pursuit, before he was jostled by two men who, crowding by him with an oath and some semi-intelligible, slighting remark about "plucking the pretty snow-drop ahead," followed after her. Stepping to the curb to avoid the glare of the street lamps so he could look beyond the men, he saw the girl give one terrified backward glance and then commence running. At this the men increased their own pace, with so sure an indication of their intention of overtaking her that Jim hesitated no longer, but darted to the opposite side of the street and, unnoticed in the darkness and storm and unsuspected by the two men in their preoccupation, gained rapidly

upon them and was soon trailing them directly opposite but just behind their line of vision.

The men worked closer and closer to their flying prey, Jim in the meanwhile growing hot and cold by turns; when, at the end of the second block, the poor girl, either from the iciness of the pavement or because of her excessive fright, lost her footing and fell, striking her head against an iron-fence railing. As she attempted to rise, half stunned, one of her pursuers reached her side, and taking her by the shoulders, pushed her down again upon her back and held her there. The other marauder, who was the shorter of the two, stooped low and, grasping her feet, raised them in the air. Pulling both her dress-skirt and woolen underskirt up above her waist, he threw them over her head, and his companion held them tight against her mouth to stifle her cries for help. The two then essayed to lift her bodily from the ground; but, driven to desperation, she kicked and struggled so fiercely that she broke the short man's hold on one of her ankles; and, in his sudden snatch to regain it, he over-balanced and tumbled, the heel of her shoe shod with a skate-iron hitting him squarely on the temple as he went down.

All this transpired in the space of a few seconds and before Jim could recover from that

strange and benumbing mental trance with which a sudden mental shock ties in impotency the hands and feet until the paralyzed blood revives and rushes again through its proper channels. But before the fallen man, rubbing his head and cursing with pain, could get up, Jim had swung across the street automatically, and attacked him from the rear, delivering a kick on his jaw that dropped him like a fat steer. He lay there senseless and unmoving. Turning instantly to meet the other villain, who had partly let go of the girl to defend himself against this unexpected succorer, he grappled him with the strength and fury of a madman, and boy as he was, and much the lighter of the two combatants, was fast reducing his adversary to sorry straits, when the latter drew a revolver from the outside pocket of his overcoat and, unable to take aim, fired point-blank at Jim; then wheeled to the left, stumbled over the form of the girl, righted himself by a supreme exertion and ran.

Blinded by the flash and powder of the gun at so short a range and exhausted and stupefied by the terrific contact of the struggle and its sudden ending, Jim reeled against a tree, and clung there dazed, until his clearing brain began to perceive his surroundings—first, as in a haze and then more distinctly, but without power

to associate the present moment with those just passed. On coming completely to his senses he was conscious of his left hand instinctively trying to brush away something from his face and shirt-front, and, holding it to the light, he found it covered with blood. He wondered whose blood it was until he discovered it was still trickling from a glancing gun-shot wound on his own forehead. Fumbling in his pockets, he extracted his handkerchief and bound it about his head, and making up his mind he could not be seriously hurt as his hands and feet still obeyed his will, he picked up the revolver, which his last antagonist had dropped when he discharged it, and held it in readiness to repulse any assault from the other man, whom he last remembered as lying senseless on the frozen grass. But he was gone, having undoubtedly "come to" in time to choose discretion as the better part of valor.

So, seeing no sign of either of his vanquished foes, Jim looked around as sharply as he could, in his present plight, for the girl he had defended. He finally found her crawling on her hands and knees towards another tree some three hundred feet away, crying and talking to herself incoherently. When he approached her she had reached the tree; and she tried to hide behind it, as though she thought him one of

her assailants. It was several minutes before he was able to pacify and reassure her sufficiently to induce her to let him touch her. But upon observing his bandaged forehead and blood-stained face and clothes, she seemed to recover rapidly from her delirious state; and he lifted her into an upright position and supported her wavering steps to the nearest lamp-post's light. (As usual, not a policeman was in sight; and the sound of the pistol shot was drowned in the roar of the gale and excited no attention from other citizens.)

Here he was enabled for the first time to look at her closely, and he was startled by the beauty and graceful outlines of her youthful face and figure, which were strongly apparent in spite of her terrible experience and disarranged, shabby clothes. One of her stockings was down and the heel broken from a shoe, and her dress-skirt was nearly torn from her body. Her hat was gone and her luxuriant black hair streamed in the wind, alternately revealing and hiding her pale countenance. Commiserating her embarrassed shrinking from his gaze, Jim slipped off his overcoat, and, wrapping it closely about her shivering shape, asked her "How far it was to her home; or where she wished him to take her." It appeared from the story she voluntarily told to him, that she lived far over

on the West side with a dressmaker for whom she worked, and had been sent out that night to deliver a package near Michigan avenue and Thirteenth street. She had some difficulty in locating the right person to whom to deliver the package, and had been further delayed while its recipient tried on and criticised the garments it contained; so it was quite late before she could start back. That, becoming confused by the darkness and the unfamiliar streets, she had stopped to ask her way of the two men; and they, having purposely misdirected her, turned about and followed along after her; when she became thoroughly alarmed and ran desperately ahead, caring not which way she went so long as she might succeed in shaking them off.

She had no friends or acquaintances living on the South side, it was already past one o'clock in the morning and she was trembling from the reaction of her exciting escape and chilled with the cold. It was imperative, therefore, to act promptly; and when Jim proposed to take her to his own home for the night, she gave him one long, penetrating look and said, "Yes; she could trust *him* and would go with him, especially since he needed immediate attention for his own injured head." Their walk was a hard and dreary one, but, with frequent

stops to let her rest, they shortly reached his house. They found it shut up and no one at home, the woman who generally attended to the cooking and housework for Jim being away at the bedside of a sick child. Either Jim did not know of her probable absence or else he had thought of it too late to change his plans. He was himself nearly exhausted and the girl on the verge of collapsing, and he set her down on the outside steps while he went to unlock the front door and turn on the lights in the kitchen and his bedroom. This was the only sleeping room in service in the house at the time, his mother's room having been closed since her decease and the charwoman sleeping out.

When he returned to conduct in the young girl, he discovered she had fainted from exposure and her exertions; so he was compelled to gather her up in his arms and carry her, taking her into the kitchen and dropping her in a large rocking-chair. Fortunately there was still a low fire, easily replenished, in each of the two small stoves the one-story building contained, and, throwing a shovelful or two of fresh coal on each, Jim unhesitatingly pulled off her shoes and stockings, which were wringing wet, moved the chair close up to the kitchen stove; and, hunting up a half

empty bottle of brandy he recollected seeing in the cupboard at the time of his mother's last illness, he forced her to swallow most of its contents. This brought a slight color to her white face and caused her to move spasmodically for a minute, but she relapsed again into unconsciousness. He bathed her forehead with cold water, chafed her hands, arms and feet, and did everything he could think of to bring her to, but without avail.

The pistol-wound in his head, aggravated by inattention and the severe strain he had gone through, now began to pain him severely; he felt a dizziness coming over him which he could not dispel; and the blood which had coagulated on the wound in the cold night air commenced to soften and flow in the heat of the room.

Alarmed by his own condition, he hastily bandaged the injury anew with a wet towel, and despairing of reviving his inert patient before he should himself become too faint to wait upon her, he lifted her carefully from the chair and carried her unsteadily into his own bedroom. There he removed his overcoat, which he had thus far left on her to assist the warmth of the stove, and laid her gently and respectfully on the bed.

In removing the overcoat her dress-skirt came away with it and fell on the floor. He

covered her softly with a blanket, then turned down the light; and he had just sufficient strength left to start towards the door, after one last smoothing of her hair from her face and an irresistible touching of his lips to her brow; when overtaxed nature gave way. He sank slowly beside the bed, his overcoat where it opportunely lay, softening the force of the fall to his head, and all became a blank to him.

And there the caretaker found them in the morning with their positions unchanged, except that he in his semi-delirium had rolled over towards the bed and thrown his arm upon her pillow, and she in her dreams had locked her fingers in his and reclined facing him with his hand lightly pressed against her now-fevered cheek. Rousing him in trepidation from his condition of half sleep, half stupor, the caretaker hurried him into the kitchen; and upon examining his hurt, went after a near-by doctor. The latter came at once and dressed the wound, pronouncing it not dangerous, and then gave his attention to the still-sleeping maiden. He advised them not to disturb her, as rest and slumber were nature's own, and the best, specifics for her recovery, and quietly took his departure, leaving instructions to call him only when she should have awakened naturally and of her own accord.

After a light breakfast and a more circumstantial retelling of his adventure to the anxiously curious old colored woman, Jim ventured into the darkened chamber of the sleeper, and opening slightly the wooden inside blinds, gazed long and earnestly upon the unconscious companion of his recent strange encounter. And as he looked the realization was suddenly borne in upon him that romance had come to him at last and the prophecy of his nocturnal imaginings had proved true.

Business was not to be thought of in the suspense hanging over the slow hours that might elapse before the girl opened her eyes again, and the two faithful watchers remained in the kitchen, eagerly listening for the first sound from the room beyond. When it eventually came Jim sent the motherly woman in alone to nurse her and soothe her first alarm at her unfamiliar surroundings; and when, a half hour later, the two appeared in the doorway, he was busily engaged in preparing supper and endeavored to look unconcerned.

Not so the young girl; she went straight up to him and, holding out her hands, called him by name—and in that moment all the pent up affection of his lonely young heart went out to her.

The older woman remained at the house; and,

owning no living relatives to whom she could go or appeal, the younger one was persuaded to stay there for a day or two until she should entirely recover from her nervous shock and they could determine the best method of providing for her immediate future. For she had no desire to return to her old situation with the dressmaker, where she had been poorly fed and miserably paid and had slept alone in an unheated garret. With her consent, Jim undertook to find for her some more propitious opening elsewhere.

She was very young and willing, though utterly destitute, and her womanly charms just budding into such a promise of rare fascination that Jim could not bear the thought of thrusting her again out unguarded upon the cold world; and it was mutually decided between the three that she was to continue a welcome guest there indefinitely. Her approval of this arrangement was obtained, however, only upon the assurance that she should be allowed to do everything in her power about the house and to add her mite to the finances of the home as soon as she secured paid work. The mother's long-dismantled sleeping room was reopened and prepared for its two new occupants; the older woman, who was a childless widow, moved her belongings into the house; and thus Jim made his *premier*

entrée in the rôle of head of a household. Through his constant reading and his long non-association with other, illiterate, Negroes, he had already dropped his native dialect, and his language was now practically that of the better class of white people. In fact, he was, if anything, too seriously inclined towards exactness in both rhetoric and life, though he understood his own practical limitations and that of his race at large in those respects.

Jemima, the girl, was of a sunny, helpful disposition and fairly well educated, with a natural, inherited refinement; the other woman was thankful for a home and eager to cook appetizing dishes; Jim was full of his newly-discovered passion for feminine grace and charm and proud of his abruptly-acquired dignity of presiding at the head of the table; and here for many blissful days, oblivious of society's conventions, they passed their mornings and evenings together in intelligent discourse and unaffected happiness—such happiness as might be envied by many a strait-laced matron and maid who judge themselves and their neighbors by rule and not by heart.

And, of course, rightly or wrongly, Jim *loved* the girl—how could he help it?

So conscientious a nature as Jemima's could not long permit its possessor to remain idle, and

under these brighter auspices she soon procured reasonably well-paid employment in a downtown store; and great was her delight and enthusiasm when, seated with him in the little parlor one Saturday night, she offered Jim her first week's wages intact.

"Here is the first installment of my board-bill, Jim," she cried gayly.

"No, no! I can not have it so, dear!" he exclaimed; "It would look too much like accepting a reward for the small service I have been enabled by good fortune to render you, and for which I have already been a thousand times repaid by the exquisite pleasures you, yourself, have added to my humble life and home."

"But, it is right that you should take it, Jim; where would I be today and what might not be my hopeless fate but for you? I should be an ingrate indeed if I did not insist upon your taking all I earned. Come, please, do take it! you hurt me very much by refusing; I cannot accept charity, even from you, after the temporary necessity has passed—I should loathe myself and loathe you, too, if I did so!"

Astounded by the vehemence and agony of her insistence, Jim hesitated; but quickly regaining his firmness of purpose, he turned sadly towards her and, drinking in all her sweetness and beauty with eyes in which love and



JEMIMA

despair fought with pride, took both her hands in his and said:

“No, Jemima, it can not be; I could never, under any circumstances, accept money from a woman such as you unless either she was already related to me by the ties of blood or else expected soon to be related still more closely to me by the ties of marriage; and for the latter blessing, dearly as I love you—and I love you with an adoration that has fed upon the very need of hiding itself from you—I know I cannot hope.”

Her eyelids drooped beneath his suddenly impassioned gaze; the red blood's flame (nature's badge of both woman's modesty and woman's shame) mounted furiously to her forehead; and dropping to her knees before his chair like a clinging child, she hid her face on his breast and lay there sighing convulsively in slow, choking sobs.

Frightened and taken completely off his guard by her unexpected actions, he could not suppress his passion, and held her close, as though he felt that any parting now must be forever.

Soon her sobbing died away, and, raising her tearful eyes to his, she spoke:

“Ah! Jim, you cannot know how I have longed and prayed for this! Oh, the delicious

ecstasy which overwhelmed me when I first thought you seemed to care for me, and the dreariness that settled on my heart when I assured myself that you *could* not! For *I* have loved *you* always, from the very beginning, and shall always love you till the very end. You say that *you* love *me*; then, why can you never hope to marry me? I do not understand."

He bowed his head over hers in mental anguish for several minutes ere he could command his voice, and his tones shook with uncontrollable emotion as he replied:

"Can you not see, dearest!—you *must* see the utter impossibility of it all—the insurmountable barrier that neither greatness, wealth nor truest worth can shatter down—the dark and cruel curse of birth with which a supposedly merciful God has clouded my horizon, forever dooming me from the blameless cradle to the welcome grave! Of what advantage worth while to me now were fame or fortune, even could I aspire to their achievement, if *you* must still be withheld from me? If ever a man was tempted to 'curse his God and die,' I am that man! And all this miraged happiness, all these sleepless dreams, are given me now by a diabolical Fate but to lift my spirit to such ethereal heights that the consummate cruelty of its eventual fall must freeze the bloodless marrow

of the arch field himself to contemplate! The tears of all the downtrodden of the earth for ages immemorable, the pleas for mercy of all the damned in hell, nor the prayers of all the saints in Heaven to the end of time, can not wash out my stain! And that it should be I, innocent of any wrong to man or woman or child and guiltless in the eyes of Heaven, who must bear this brand, like an ineradicable mark of Cain! O, it is terrible!—maddening! Too horrible to believe or realize!—I shall go mad, mad, mad!”

Trembling like a leaf in his arms, Jemima tried to stem this torrent of invective rushing from his breaking heart by twining her arms about his neck and placing her lips to his with an unreasoning and impulsive instinct to kiss his pain away. As he ceased she slid from his embrace and arose to her feet. Holding him at arm's length with both hands upon his breast, she looked him in the face wonderingly and fearfully.

“What is this dreadful thing of which you speak and how does it prevent us and deny our right to the happiness we seek in each other? Be quick; I cannot bear this suspense!”

“Must I say it, then? The bare words themselves will seem as cold and meaningless beside their awful purport as does the marble tomb

above the wreckage of the gnawing worms it hides when we but think upon the living majesty of death. It is the *curse of color*! I cannot marry you, dear heart, because of the simple fact that you are white and I am black. Legal or illegal, I do not believe in miscegenation."

"Oh! thank God!" With tears of mingled joy and pity she took his face between her hands, and, with warm blushes mantling on her neck and cheeks and forehead, stood confused and shy before him.

"Thank God for what?" he cried.

"For giving me the power to break your barrier with a single word—I am not white; I am an octoroon."


As when some spirit doomed while on this earth to inhabit the mortal body of a poor and halting and ungifted being, bursts its bonds at death, and, rising first in new, uncertain flight on wings grown weak from long disuse, whirls suddenly and takes its swift and certain way through countless angel hosts straight to the awaiting God-Head, so these two loving, humble hearts, relieved from doubt and fasting, rushed rapturously into Love's Elysian Fields to pluck the fruit and flowers of soulful fancy waiting for them there.

How they were betrothed; how they overcame the legal obstacle of their being, both of

them, under age, through the appointment by the probate court of a guardian for each of them, who gave consent to their immediate marriage; how they were married quietly and lived together in that true happiness and thrift which a fond eagerness to outdo each other in mutual helpfulness and a genuine hunger for ambitious correlated labors, alone can bring; and how they kept to the old house until it was burned over their heads in the fire of 1874, and then started life afresh on "Goose Island," where we find them so snugly established at the commencement of this tale: is not essential to the completeness of my story, and so is better stated undetailed.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FOUNDLING

 UPPER is all ready and on the table, Jim; come right in and sit down; just wash your hands quick at the sink and don't wait a minute to change your clothes, or it will get cold. I've got such a nice, fat, young chicken—it's fine! I can hardly keep my knife out of it; and such corn—best I ever bought or raised, and so cheap! It isn't 'turkey' weather, and so we can't have cranberry sauce with the chicken, the way you like it, but I've brought out one of those little glass jars of my own preserved currants I was saving for company, and we'll just eat it up all by ourselves. Now you bring in the potatoes while I get the pot and pour the coffee, and we'll have it right at first, with the meat. It'll liven you up so and make the whole meal taste so good. There—was there ever such a comfortable couple?"

They sat down at either side of their small but bountifully spread table, and Jemima inclined her head as Jim, folding his hands rev-

erently above the spotless cloth in a childlike simplicity, prayed aloud softly:

“Our Father, who looketh down on many homes, filled alike by those who know Thee and by those who know Thee not; whose care provideth for all who seek Thy ways with contrite hearts; whose Mercy sheddeth abundance on the erring ones in sweet forgiveness, too; raise Thou the lowly from the dust and help the hungry and the sad. For thy munificence to us—for Thy kind lending of Thy guiding hand—take Thou our gratitude and trust. Amen.”

As Jim closed his prayer and sat for a moment with transfigured face, Jemima quietly arose and kissed him and the supper was begun in silence. Presently Jim spoke.

“Well, dear, I know of no further blessing we could covet now unless it be the pattering of little feet and the sight of little, living images of ourselves about our board. That is our only cross, and sometimes I think it is all so for a purpose and that the Lord will show us in His own good way and time why this gift we crave is still withheld from us. I have a premonition—call it fanciful if you will—that we shall not be alone here much longer.”

“O, Jim!” ejaculated his wife in superstitious awe.

Supper over, Jemima cleared the table and

washed the dishes and silver while her husband stepped into their tiny bedroom to change his clothes—or “to dress,” as the English call it. Half an hour afterwards they were both seated in the living room at the front of the house, in quiet, peaceful content, Jim smoking his post-prandial pipe over the daily paper and Jemima with her work-basket on the floor beside her, darning and mending like a breathing automaton. Later in the evening the lamps were turned low and the windows thrown wide open to let in the cool, dew-laden autumn breeze. Jim lay back in his chair and rocked slowly, in tune to the plaintive airs Jemima drew from the small melodeon (that instrument which lends itself so readily to hymns and so reluctantly to dance music).

The silvery light of the full, white moon diffused a soft refulgence through the open casements, its narrowed rays penetrating the interior gloom and falling straight upon an engraving of the “Madonna and Child,” which it bathed in a celestial glory. Out into the “quietude of the vast, care-dispelling night” drifted the soothing words and low, sweet notes of a clear and sympathetic voice as Jemima sang, her fingers lightly pressing the unseen keys, an old, simple school-song:

"Oh, the south wind comes with perfumed breath
From out the woodland hills;
And it fans my cheek and it kisses the flowers,
And the willow's branches fills."

* * * * *

Fall soon faded into winter, and the days passed quickly with them in the same uneventful, yet never-monotonous routine of their well-rounded lives. It was now the night before Christmas, and the snow lay deep on all the sleeping flowers of their little garden and was heaped high on either side where Jim had shoveled a path from the gate to the front door, but all was warm and snug within the cottage. Outside the snow still fell in blinding whiteness, the hurrying, persistent, yet never-colliding flakes gleaming like myriad shooting stars across the little misty trapezoidal panes of glass protecting the flickering lights of the lamp-posts. Jim and Jemima had just returned from a Christmas Eve entertainment at a "poor people's" church over on the "mainland" which they often attended and where, tonight, they had unostensively contributed for more than their share to the presents for the children gathered there, and had entered gayly into the spirit of the Yuletide, bedecking the great tree and enjoying the little ones' eager expectancy and fulfilled delights in a way many childless people seem to have of "propitiating the storks."

Jim stirred up the fire in the kitchen stove, which in ordinarily cold weather did duty for the whole house, and producing a long bottle from some mysterious source, filled two glasses with ruddy wine and handed one, with mock gallantry, to Jemima.

“Let us drink, dear heart,” said he, “to hale old Saint Nicholas, the greatest friend of childhood, the patron saint of both rich and poor; at whose shrine the highest and the lowliest bend the knee with the offerings of loving-kindness, as unconsciously and as surely, to this day, as did the shepherds, the wise men and the kings two thousand years ago when they followed the Star of Bethlehem to the Christ-child’s humble manger-cradle and laid their gifts in gladness at his feet. He who would destroy by cold and vulgar reasoning this imaginative, legendary belief and custom, filled as it is with all the everlasting qualities that adhere to it from the basic truth of its origin in the poetic and beautiful story of the birth of Christ, would take from men that one sweet touch of nature which makes all the world akin and rob their children of an innocent earthly heaven; for Christmas is Love’s birthday.”

“I wonder what Santa Claus will bring us tonight, Jim,” laughed Jemima. “I looked up

the chimney this evening and I'm sure I saw his red nose, and he couldn't have a better night for sleighing."

"If you hear his reindeers' bells jingling on our roof be sure and wake me, so I can see if he looks like you, Jim," she added mischievously, and with a knowing wink.

There came a muffled knock on the house-door.

"Listen, Jim, I bet that's old Santa Claus himself! You wait here till I tiptoe out and surprise him," cried Jemima.

"Bring him in if he's out there and we'll hold up his pack," he returned laughingly; "he don't get away without leaving us an extra fine present this time!"

She opened the door softly and peeked out; but seeing no one, called: "Who is there?" No answer. She called again without result.

Closing the door, she returned to the kitchen, where Jim was patiently waiting, confident the knocker would prove to be only some neighbor running in to exchange Christmas news and greetings.

"Who was it?" he asked her.

"It is strange. There was no one outside," she replied; "yet I'm sure I heard a knock—didn't you hear it?"

"Yes; if it were Hallowe'en night instead of

Christmas Eve, I would think it was some small boy playing tricks on us; but at this season of the year—no.”

They returned to their usual occupations still wondering and were about to undress for bed, when suddenly the knocking was repeated, this time distinct and emphatic.

“There it is again!” they exclaimed in unison.

“You go to the door, Jim,” faltered his wife, “I’m afraid. Maybe it’s a burglar, though burglars don’t generally announce their presence so openly, do they?”

He put down the lamp he had just taken up and, walking firmly to the door, threw it open its full width and stood boldly relieved against the light from the kitchen; so that anyone hiding without could not have failed to see him plainly.

“Who are you? Show up there, sir!” he shouted sharply. Not a soul was in sight; the cold, dark void gave back no answer to his demand. He turned around to Jemima, who had followed him.

“I don’t like this at all; it is getting too ghostly for me—there is something wrong about it,” said he; “if we hear anything more of it I’ll get my gun and investigate further.”

Annoyed and mystified and their nerves af-

fectured to a greater degree that they cared to acknowledge even to each other, they finally put out the light and retired.

Jemima always slept very lightly, and about one o'clock in the morning she was awakened by a slight, intermittent noise, as if a child were crying. She got up and hastily donned a wrapper; and throwing an apron over her head, she felt her way cautiously about the house in the dark, trying to trace the sounds, which would start and then stop again. They led her to the small front-door vestibule; and, satisfied that they proceeded from some source without the house, she at last summoned up enough courage to turn the key and draw the bolt of the outer door and pull it open just a crack. The noise then became clearly audible, and was plainly the voice of a very young babe.

Emboldened by the innocent cause of the disturbance and now thoroughly aroused to action, she walked deliberately out in her bare feet, and at the foot of the steps, where it was hidden from view behind a snow-bank as the path curved to the left, stumbled against a dark, woolen bundle from which there immediately arose a feeble cry of fretfulness and affright. Shading her eyes with her hand, she stooped over and mechanically picked it up, her heart beating wildly at the suddenness and shock of

her discovery. Looking carefully about for any one who might have been guilty of leaving any living thing to such a fate, she held it tenderly to her bosom a minute; then ran with it up the steps and into the house, where her husband, disquieted by the cold draft through the open door, had awakened in alarm and now rushed dazedly to meet her.

They carried it into the kitchen, lit the lamp in feverish haste, threw off the lid of the little stove to let out more heat, and then carefully unwrapped the bundle. Whence Jemima, with a scared, white face and trembling hands, drew slowly forth a poor, little, half-frozen baby, who opened his eyes and stared at them in mute surprise and then cried feebly.

Jim and Jemima were stricken mute with horror and pity, and for a time neither could find tongue to utter the thoughts that held them enthralled, but stood and gaped at each other in mutual confusion. Then came the reanimation of their reason, and, without a word or the waste of a minute, they set to work rubbing its hands and feet, arms and face, Jemima holding it on her lap, close to the stove, while her husband rapidly warmed a tin cupful of milk. This the infant at first could take but gingerly, in little sips, looking up enquiringly into the faces of his new acquaintances between swallows; but

gradually becoming comfortably "thawed out," he soon attacked it with an avidity which spoke worlds for the wonderful power of resuscitation of infancy.

The baby, a boy, appeared to be about a year and a half old and was warmly dressed, though in clothes he had nearly outgrown. Whoever left him in his perilous position had at least taken considerable pains to keep him from danger of freezing. After the judicious introduction into his little "tummie" of the warm milk, he promptly fell fast asleep; and but partially undressing him, as he had brought no personal baggage with him and they had not the ghost of a "nightie" to put him in, they laid him sadly and fondly on their own bed.

As they did so Jemima felt something cold and metallic fall against the back of her hand. Reaching down, she lifted up the links of a finely wrought gold necklace fastened around his neck. Pendant from this necklace was a small heart-shaped gold locket upon one side of which blazed a half-carat ruby of blood-red lustre, whose preservation seemed to disprove any motive of cupidity on the part of those who might have been his kidnapers. Astounded anew, she held up the locket to the radiance from the kitchen lamp and at Jim's suggestion

pried it open; when out dropped a tightly folded piece of white paper.

They covered the sleeping babe gently and, carrying this paper to the lamp, silently unfolded it. And there they read upon it, written in a woman's hand that wavered over the opening words but became quite firm before the message ended: "This baby is a 'natural' and will never be reclaimed by me." It was evidently a case of deliberate, premeditated child-abandonment; yet they wondered at the cruelty of a mother who could indite so damning a note about her own offspring.

Going back to the child, they detached the chain and locket from his neck and brought them also to the light, to look them over for any possible marks of identification. The chain divulged no secrets of its past. The inside of the locket was fitted with a glass in each half, one of these encasing a lock of yellow hair, the other framing another lock, both coarse and black. There were no other evidences of individuality. They carefully replaced the written note inside the locket, reclasped its chain about the slumbering baby's neck and came away.

There was no sleep for *them* that night. Through the long hours, besieged by alternating hopes and doubts and ruled by conflicting emotions, they struggled with their new, strange

problem. The sunless Christmas dawn found them on their knees in prayerful supplication to their Heavenly Father to teach their hearts aright his hidden will and lead them safely on, in this their fresh and awful accountability.

Not for one moment, however, did they dream of turning over the child to the cold claims of any of the city's charitable institutions "devoted" to the care of deserted children—those travesties on home where bodies may be fed but hearts are starved. They would, of course, notify the police department and newspapers; so that if by any possibility the child had been feloniously taken from his parents, he might be restored to them at once; but in their own hearts they both feared and hoped that such was not the case.

With the coming of day their minds grew clearer and less subject to useless anxieties and forebodings and their spirits in a measure revived. They began to enthuse more over the agreeable probabilities of the situation, as one always does when busy action can be made to take the place of idle worry. Jemima looked at her husband's woe-begone face, and was suddenly struck with the ludicrousness of its expression and the humorousness of their predicament; she burst out in a shame-faced laugh.

"Cheer up, Jim, I guess the baby must have

been intended for our Christmas present," she ventured, "and Santa Claus never takes back his presents, you know. It would make him out, as the children say, an 'injun giver,' and I'm sure he wouldn't relish that mysterious stigma.

"The poor little waif is very dark—darker much than I am, and is to all appearances a colored child; so there could be no impropriety in our keeping him, at least until we can learn the truth about those who have so cruelly cast him off."

"I am beginning to love him already," she whispered, her poor starved mother-heart crying out against their lives' barrenness of childhood's charms.

Jim brightened perceptively, but, manlike, he hesitated, trying to reason out in his mind in advance, more rationally and closely, the effects of any action they might take. Jemima waited, but as he did not speak, she slyly added:

"Don't you remember what you said last autumn?"

"No—what was it?"

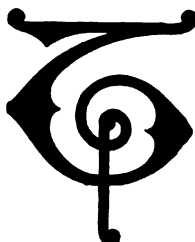
"I am afraid it is a presumptuous and sacrilegious thing to say, but I believe you spoke more prophetically than you knew when you said: 'I have a premonition—call it fanciful if you will—that we shall not be alone here much longer!'"

“That settles it, Jemima; thank you for remembering. I am willing, and I can see that you are more than willing, to take up this precious burden of love and delicate responsibility which seems sent to us by heaven; and at such a time as this the beautiful memory of our Savior as a babe himself serves as a call to us, to bid us keep in mind the Bible’s loving admonition, ‘He saith unto you, feed my sheep.’ ”

Together they passed into the room where lay the baby, still in rosy slumber and all unaware of the overshadowing crisis of his little life. As they gazed upon him a mist appeared to gather before their eyes, wet with the tears of new desire and a solemn joy and pity. And there they stood; and Jemima, twining her arms around her husband’s neck, rested her head confidently upon his broad shoulder and said, simply, “Yes, little darling, we will keep you, and, oh! we’ll love you, too.”

CHAPTER V.

IN WHICH LIFE CHANGES ITS ASPECT TO SEVERAL PERSONS



HIS Christmas day having fallen on Saturday, there was no work to be done outside the house until the following Monday, and Jim and Jemima had ample time to learn to accommodate their old habits to the new order of things. It all seemed to come to them so naturally that they were surprised at themselves.

Outside, a late-rising sun dispelled the snow-clouds. Life began to take on a brighter hue, and they found many delicious confidences to impart to each other about the new arrival in "the family." When the babe awoke and smiled in perfect faith at them with his fawn-like eyes and kiss-compelling lips, they were delighted; and when they fed him awkwardly and he broke out in a laughing, healthy coo, they could no longer contain their pleasurable excitement, but hugged and kissed him in utter abandonment. They were like two children with a new and wonderful mechanical toy. Everything about the house took on new meaning in

its relation to the new member of the family who must now be considered; and it seemed to them that never before had the sun shone so brightly, the fire given such home-like, toasty warmth, nor the food been so palatable and important.

On the afternoon of the same day Jim went to the nearest police station and notified the precinct captain of what had happened to them. The latter individual was very much taken up with his own holiday plans and evinced but a languid interest in the affair, saying such things were common enough. If there was any hurry about it he would send over a roundsman to take the foundling away to some public institution or other in an hour or so, though he was short of men today as he had allowed every officer he could spare to go home to his wife and children for the Christmas celebration. Jim listened with a beating heart, and was much relieved in mind when he learned that they did not have to give up the child at once. He said there was no hurry, and the captain looked pleased.

All hands being suited, Jim then bought the good-natured minion of the law a big cigar, and they "parted frinds," as the Irish officer expressed it, he being glad to be temporarily reprieved from a disagreeable duty. Jim escaped

from the smelly station feeling like a man who had just been told of a fortune to which he had fallen heir through the "convenient" demise of a hitherto-unheard-of and rather mythical old uncle. Boarding a cityward passing car, he visited the local rooms of the few daily newspapers then in circulation in Chicago, and reported the finding of the child on the night before, arranging at the same time for the insertion of an advertisement in the "lost and found" and personal columns of each, describing the child, and so forth. With awakening paternal care he stopped on his way home at the house of his family physician and laughingly invited him to call and open a school of instruction, with himself and wife as neophytes, in the proper care and latest improved methods of rearing young ones.

Great was the astonishment of the Mannings' neighbors upon opening their papers Sunday morning, to read therein in undubitable print the startling story of the unheralded coming of a "ready made" family to the occupants of the little brick cottage, entirely without the sanction of "the storks." And many and various were their comments thereon. By noon there was quite a steady stream of men and women knocking at the cottage door, some calling upon the transparent pretext of extending belated

Christmas greetings, others openly curious in their anxiety to "get a good look at it." Even the children caught the infection of interested curiosity; and in their endeavors to "spy out" the little baby Santa Claus really and truly brought down the chimney after carrying it all that way in his sleigh, they soon had the cottage windows all around worn nearly clear of frost by their little hot noses and nimbly-rubbing fingers.

They argued spiritedly among themselves for and against the admissibility of this supposition, the youngest ones being invariably for and the older ones against it; until Jim himself being appealed to as their "umpire," completely routed the scoffers by solemnly avowing that old Santa had certainly brought it, in a gorgeous red sleigh drawn by eight tiny reindeer all covered with snow and bells, and had graciously asked them, right to their faces, to accept it as their Christmas gift from him, he having brought it straight down from Heaven not half an hour before he reached the cottage. This caused considerable laughter among some of the visiting "grown-ups," while others of them looked aside and by their slight nods of approval and moistening eyes showed their understanding of and sympathy in the loving and innocent deception.

Altogether, it was a great day for "Goose Island," and the oldest inhabitant there, still to this day, chews on it as a choice morsel of history, with which she is ever ready to regale one upon the slimmest provocation or excuse.

The doctor came in the afternoon, and upon examination pronounced their little god a perfectly healthy and unusually bright and pretty specimen, and opined that he showed little or no effect of his "airy trip with St. Nicholas." The infant himself had no doubts on the subject, and discovering one of his bare feet as they undressed him, immediately appropriated it, with a vastly selfish assumption of possession, and promptly put it in his mouth; then grinned, much to the edification of his assembled admirers. And so the day passed and the quiet winter night came on.

Jim and Jemima put the baby between them in the bed, each jealously guarding him with a gently caressing hand, and, tired out at last by the day's stirring experiences, floated happily down the river of enchanted visions into the Land of Nod,

"Like one who wraps the drapery of his couch
About him and lies down to pleasant dreams."

* * * * *

Ten short years have passed away. In due course the child was legally adopted by them,

and, as he grew to the age of perception, was taught to regard them as his natural parents. He developed a tender, clinging disposition, and was never so happy as when following and helping Jemima about the little house and garden or riding in the wagon with Jim,

"And the child grew in stature and wisdom and grace,
And the light of intelligence lit up his face."

On his sixth birthday he entered the public graded school across the river, there being none on the "Island," and mingled with the children of the surrounding neighborhoods. He learned rapidly, evidencing a mind as quick and bright as that of any white child in his classes, and at eleven years of age he was in what is now called the eighth (the highest) grade of the common schools and was the youngest scholar in his class. In those early days the school-room desks and wooden benches were of common pine painted green, and were double, the two seat-mates of each being physically withheld from too close communion with each other by a semi-circular hole cut in the middle of their joint seat. There was not even sex segregation, but girls and boys, white or black, were assigned desks together promiscuously. Not until the pupils entered high-school were single desks and sex segregation provided and enforced.

With their new incentive to greater effort

and ambition, Jim and Jemima prospered more and more, in a plodding way, and the former had now quite a fair-sized paint and paper store of his own and employed skilled workmen on his more important contracts.

The simplicity and religious earnestness of their lives remained unchanged, however, and the sunny, cheery atmosphere of their home, their firm but unselfish treatment of the child, and the qualities of gallantry, honesty and bravery and the love of the beautiful, which they constantly inculcated in him, made his early existence a far more *ideal* one than generally falls to the lot of even rich men's sons. In a word, they made themselves noble and happy by making him so.

Long years afterward when these, his foster-parents, had gone

“ . . . to join
The innumerable caravan that moves,
To the pale realms of shade, where each shall take
His chamber in the silent halls of death,”

the sweet and sacred memory of their personal devotion and their yearning sympathy with his every mood and dawning emulation, came back to him in many a quiet hour with a sustaining and soothing tranquillity, and he felt that in his darkest days of doubt and trial and sorrow, no matter when or how they might arise or come, he could ever withdraw in silence from the liv-

ing and hold heart-eased communion with these two, his living dead.

He had been christened "John," because "by the grace of God" he was sent to them to fill their hungry hearts with his childhood's love and beauty.

During his attendance at the common school and up to the time of his entrance into high-school, his color had passed without comment, derogatory or otherwise, as he was a favorite with both the grown people and the children about him, all of whom knew and respected him. With the unwritten democracy of childhood, he was accepted and sought after by the best of the boys and girls, who, having grown up with him, never gave the disparity of his race a thought. Nevertheless, when he graduated from the neighborhood school and took up his further studies at the old "Central High School," situated in an altogether different locality (near West Monroe and Halsted streets), and where he was almost a stranger to the advanced scholars around him, he sensed a perceptible changing of conditions and noticed, at first in innocent wonder and then with quickening shame, that many of the boys, and especially of the girls, began to hold themselves aloof from him. Outside the old Gothic, cathedral-style, rough-stone, high-school building, with its antiquated

windows protected by small diamond-shaped panes of glass innumerable—even, sometimes, on the adjacent play-grounds, certain scholars affected not to see him; and occasionally he would overhear in passing some slurring remark about “colored presumption” or “fresh nigger boy.”

Deeply hurt at heart by this cruel, if callow, ostracism and unthinking snobbishness, he was yet too proud, too ashamed, and too fearful of paining their loving hearts and unselfish natures, to speak of it to his foster-parents; and they to whom he should naturally have gone for comfort and philosophical strength in this, his first great despair, were, as yet, unconscious of his particular and psychological need of them.

CHAPTER VI.

THE QUARREL



HERE was one boy, the son of a well-to-do West side butcher and a leader in the school's out-door sports, though of a slow and inattentive mind in his studies, who, gradually, becoming bolder by reason of John's quiet ignoring of his veiled taunts, grew openly insulting, and made himself more obnoxious to him than all the others. They belonged in the same classes, having taken the same course, and it exasperated this bumptious youth to know that John was usually at the head of each class and he at its foot. It was his surly and often-aired opinion that "no d—d dirty little nigger could possibly have brains enough to outstrip all the white boys and girls, and he couldn't have done it unless he cheated." Some of the scholars laughed indifferently at his occasional tirades on the subject and reminded him that he would, no doubt, still continue to stick to the bottom of the class (as a sort of foundation "block-head") whether John remained with them or not; others looked pained, and flushed at the

injustice and indelicacy of his remarks. But John, who was purposely and maliciously forced to overpass this distressing cant of caste and "color line" through its frequent utterance in his immediate presence, though never addressed directly to him, felt at first stunned and helpless.

Now, as it has been proved to be a fallacious conclusion that an innocent person wrongly accused of a crime suffers less, upheld by his own conscious rectitude, than does one who is rightly accused; but that, on the contrary, the shame of his unfortunate condition is the more intensified by his horror of being considered capable of an act from which every fibre of his being would naturally recoil; while the real guilty criminal, perhaps long crime-hardened, thinks only of escaping through well-worn technicalities and ample perjury the lawful punishment that should by right be meted out to him, and wastes little or no energy of trepidation on either remorse or his future standing in the community and social scale—so poor John, a child in years and with few of the sustaining aphorisms of maturer years as yet reduced by him to helpful practice, took to heart these racial insults and apostrophisings all the more keenly in his knowledge that they were heaped upon him because of no fault or wrong-doing

of his own, but simply on account of an accident of descent over which no man had power, and which should have called for pity and not blame on the part of others.

The secret tears of grief and mortification which he shed, however, bore in time their own sure fruit, as have eventually the tears of the downtrodden and oppressed through all past generations of man, and as they must and will do from century to century while time and man shall last. Because of such tears the world of men is infinitely better to-day than it was three thousand years ago, and will be infinitely better three thousand years from now than it is to-day. For the tears of the poor and unconsidered but water and nourish the blossoms of progress; and the longer the repression of social and commercial justice, of *bona fide* legal, and unsubverted political, equality lasts, the surer and greater and more far-reaching will be their final reaction upon those who cannot see "the handwriting upon the wall."

This ill-starred son of a butcher was captain of the high-school base-ball nine and, in a general way, the bully of the school. He could brook no opposition in his cherished field of sport, and being really athletic and admittedly proficient in that line, to be sure, seldom met with any. His father slaughtered cattle, hogs

and sheep in a small way and for his own shop supplies, and the boy was sometimes called upon to aid him in the capacity of his assistant.

Perhaps this early, callousing association with pain and blood-shed in dumb animals made him cruel; perhaps he simply exulted in his natural strength and roughness; but he certainly had a habit of throwing a baseball with unnecessary swiftness and violence at short range and laughing when the more unsophisticated of the boys cried out at the sting it gave their hands or the bumps it gave to the other parts of their anatomy in trying to catch or dodge it. He elected himself, justly enough so far as skill counted, to the position of pitcher in the school nine, and he had "got onto" some famous curves through his hobnobbing with professional ball players, whose society he much affected. On the whole, he was the boy-wonder of the amateur local diamonds, and he had an ingrowing ambition to become a regular member of a professional team as soon as he could induce his father to let him leave school, which he detested anyhow. His euphonious cognomen was *Mr. William Brockhurst Stubbs*, *Bill Stubbs* for short; and his temper was as short as his abbreviated name.

One bright, hot Saturday afternoon this crack high-school nine and its substitutes and

youthful "rooters" and followers, were valiantly foregathered upon the glorious field of Olympian contentions commonly known as "Old Man Perkins' Lot," a vacant block about half a mile west and south of the school, and whose rickety wooden fence all around the four sides, gave to it some semblance of a full-fledged ball-park where an admission fee is charged.

They were there to meet and ignobly vanquish a rival ball club called the "Dirty Stockings," whose very tough and unsavory reputation had undoubtedly greatly assisted them in reaching the proud and exalted station of "champeens" of all West side juvenile nines. Two things at least, about them, were immediately apparent, even to a casual observer of their usual field tactics—they assuredly were not "gentlemen" and they certainly could play ball.

John now "held down" first base in the high-school aggregation, even Captain Stubbs being compelled to acknowledge that the school could produce no one capable of successfully replacing him. This brought him, of course, into close relations with young Stubbs when he occupied the pitcher's box; and many a hot throw delivered by the latter with unusual and undue viciousness was stopped by him only by exhibiting quick dexterity and coolness.

The game this Saturday afternoon was hotly contested with varying fortunes; until in the ninth inning, amid the encouraging and vilifying shout, roars and hoots of the crowd, now largely swelled by curious passers-by and more elderly "fans," the "Dirty Stockings" succeeded in tying the score in the first half, with the "Central High" boys yet to take their turn at the plate. An expectant and anxious hush displaced the former uproar as the first batter for the school nine nervously took his stand over the home base, and all eyes were strained upon the infield. Two balls were called on him before the pitcher of the rival team overcame his unsettled nerves and sent the sphere whirling in so swiftly as to be almost invisible in its flight. Then came a sharp crack and the bat flew over the ground in broken splinters, while the ball went straight up in the air, and curving backward descended directly into the catcher's waiting hands (they had no baseball gloves or mitts in those days). He fumbled it a second but held it safe.

"One out!" cried the umpire; and cursing his luck and the rotten bat, the crestfallen player slowly made way for the next man on the batting list. (At this early period in the history of amateur baseball the different players were usually called to bat in the regular order

of their field positions, commencing at the game's beginning with the catcher, and ending with the left fielder.)

The catcher still stood well back from the plate, and watching his chance, the second man up deftly bunted the ball down close in front of himself and reached first base on the catcher's overthrow, which finally landed him on second. A safe hit followed and first and third bases were filled, with only one man out. Captain Stubbs' turn at the bat now came, and hundreds cheered him on; for he held the highest local batting average of the season for all the clubs. Alas! for the instability of youthful vanity;—after two tremendous and confident swipes at the ball the doughty captain ignominiously struck out, and the air was rent by the cat-calls and exulting shrieks of the "Dirty Stockings'" friends and sympathizers, many of whom had themselves no stockings at all.

"Two out!" "Two out!" "Hold 'em down!" "They're rattled!" screamed the impromptu opposition coaches. "John—John Manning," cried the huddled and flustered school nine. "For God's sake, don't let 'em get you!" "It's our last chance!" Pale but quietly he approached the slab and stood, like "Horatius at the bridge"—ready to lead their forlorn hopes, like Caesar, across the Rubicon from which

there could now be no honorable turning back. The raucous voice of the "ump" broke the stillness of the awful suspense.

"One strike"—"Tuh!"

The catcher approached so close up behind John that he could feel his quick breath upon the back of his neck. With the last hope of desperation he spat on his hands and rubbed their palms in the dirt, then regrasping the stick like a drowning man clinging to a life preserver, he planted his feet firmly and well apart, straining his muscles for the final whack which he must get in to save the day. He kept his eyes glued to the left hand of the "south-paw" pitcher in the box. Swift as the eagle's flight, it seemed to him, came the ball, directly over the plate; and swifter yet it rose, and flew in a beautiful straight line clear over rightfield's head, bounding on and on until it reached, and hid under, the farthest fence.

"Run, you son of a gun!" "Run!" "Run!" "Run!"—"Second base!" "Go it!"—"Third now"—"Third" "No, back!" "Back!" "They've got the ball!" "Oh; back I tell you!" "Slide there—slide!" "Look out!" "O, they've caught him!"

"Out at third!" yelled the "master of destinies," and the surging crowd subsided. But

John's long drive had brought in both the other men on base and the game was won.

Proud and perspiring, he picked himself up and ran back to the improvised benches, to meet there the welcoming shouts and fraternal poundings of the balance of his successful team. The school gang grabbed at this opportunity for hero-worship, (that enthusiasm so dear to every unspoiled mortal) and lifted him onto a platform of living shoulders, carrying him through the crowd and in triumph down the street, with deafening sounds of victory and acclaim that shamed those of the storied Roman amphitheatre when all of Gaul was thrall to Caesar. "*Veni, vidi, vici!*" rang out their classic cry as they filled the air with caps and hats.

'Tis not a little thing, this early taste of personal glory to the young. The pabulum of hero-worship forever fed to their awakening intellects from every page of history, mayhap needs but the chance incentive of some such lauded deed of momentary importance to kindle into useful fire their dormant passions. The histories of all nations are but a history of their leaders, and a healthy emulation of their composite example once aroused, may find its ultimate goal in a future greatness far removed in

nature from those of dawning manhood's first inspired achievements.

Yet who can tell in what sweet hour
Of thoughtless childish fame
The immortal spark unnoted fell
From which the soul took flame?

Although it escaped John's notice at that exciting time, he remembered on thinking it over afterwards that Bill Stubbs was not among those who congratulated him on his fine play, but was curiously absent from the company of the rest of the students during the remainder of the afternoon. He looked eagerly for him when the class was again assembled in the class-room the following Monday morning, and was surprised to discover him scowling at him over the top of his text book with a glance of malignant hatred. Open and fair-minded himself, he failed to comprehend that adolescent youths (like too many of their elders) are not given to analytical justice in their personal likes and dislikes, and are just as apt to hate their mental, moral or physical superiors, as they are to scorn their inferiors in those differing traits; or to put it plainly, that it is not at all necessary to be wrong in order to be disliked by certain persons whose natures act in exact reversal of that law of electricity by reason of which like poles repel and unlike poles attract each other. He could think of nothing he

had done to incur any new displeasure on the part of this boy, but knowing his overbearing and intolerant disposition toward himself, he resolved to ask no questions and await his enemy's next move watchfully. He had not long to wait.

The old "Central High-School," at that period the sole high-school building in Chicago, stood south and directly back of the ancient Scammon School, the former fronting on Monroe street and the latter on Madison street; so that many of the high-school scholars daily passed through the yard of the Scammon to reach their own school. The grade of both streets had been considerably raised subsequent to the erection of the two edifices, which were among the oldest of their kind in the entire city. Hence it was necessary to go down several steps to get from the sidewalk to either yard. The common school scholars usually went home to luncheon; but the noon recess of the high-school being a short one, in order to permit the teachers to dismiss their classes for the day at the early hour of two-thirty, and the attendant students coming there from all parts of the city instead of from the immediate school district, very few either of the teachers or the students attempted to go home then, but ate out of the lunch-boxes they brought with

them or patronized the little bakeshops and restaurants near by on Halsted and Madison streets. Their favorite noon rendezvous was, for a time, a small German "home" bakery and candy and ice cream shop about a block south on Halsted street. In the strawberry season its proprietor always had fresh steaming-hot slices of strawberry shortcake of rare excellence ready-exposed in tempting array upon his counters at twelve o'clock sharp. (The old high school edifice, erected in 1855, still stands, as substantial and good style as when first built. It is now used as a repair shop and storage house by the Board of Education.)

The minute the big school bell rang for recess the boys would snatch their hats, fall down the stairs, bolt into the yard, tumble up the steps onto the sidewalk any way and every way and race diagonally across both streets for this shop, as if the life of every mother's son of them depended upon his reaching those shortcakes ahead of all the rest. The old baker was phlegmatic and of a conservative turn of mind, and rarely ever baked enough cakes to go around, as he had then the present cheap lunch counter owners' economic horror of "left-overs," and would rather disappoint his customers than cook one portion too many. So the first, panting arrivals among the boys

would invariably snatch, not one, but two or three portions, and quickly bite a hole in each to dissuade their hungry school-mates from taking the surplus away from them by force, as their lawful prizes.

Many a good-natured slap and scuffle ensued from this original stratagem, but those who got there last on one day were often first on the next, and the trailers of the crowd, as a rule, took the laugh gracefully and filled up on pie or doughnuts, or any other indigestible handy, thus evening up the current stock on hand of the shop—much to the secret satisfaction of the baker, who, like most Germans, was “wise in his own generation.”

I have no idea what has become of the little bakery-shop keeper, but I am sure, if he made no imprudent outside investments and if he died before the old high-school was discontinued, he must have died rich. “Let him R. I. P.”

Promptly at the noon hour on the Monday after the ball game, John started for the bakery as usual. As he hustled up the steps on to the Monroe street walk he felt his feet tripped from behind, and he fell forward on his hands. He turned quickly and found Stubbs right back of him. He was sure the latter had tripped him on purpose, but passed the matter off lightly, as simply a practical joke. Stubbs

bounced into the shop just ahead of him, and John, in accordance with recognized usage, whipped a chunk of short-cake out of the former's hand and bit into it; when Stubbs, in a towering rage, wheeled on him and deliberately struck him in the face. Taken completely by surprise by this uncalled-for indignity, John remained immovable for a second, staring at him blankly. Then, the hot blood rising to his forehead under the insult, he seized his would-be enemy by the shoulder and said angrily, but firmly:

"What do you mean by that, you devil?"

"I meant to push your ugly face in, you black thief,—I'll teach you to respect your betters—damn you!" shouted Stubbs.

Turning deathly white, John looked hurriedly around on the astonished and expectant faces of the crowd of boys—no one stirred or spoke. Frenzied then by the memory of all the wrongs he had suffered at the hands of his persistent insulter, he made an instant leap for Stubbs, and grasping both lapels of his coat, jerked him roughly forward sidelong. The two were standing between the crowd and the door at the moment, and, steeled and blinded by his honest passion, John's attack was so fierce and sudden that his opponent was thrown clear



"STUBBS, IN A TOWERING RAGE, WHEELED ON HIM AND DELIBERATELY STRUCK HIM IN THE FACE."

through the doorway and fell head-first and heavily on the stone sidewalk outside.

John rushed at him again, but Stubbs did not rise. He lay in a huddled heap, senseless and still, with the blood flowing from a deep cut over his brow.

The other boys, who had pushed out after the combatants, stood gaping at the silent, unmoving form in stupefied inaction. John was the first to regain the full use of his senses. Sobered and alarmed by the unanticipated result of the fight, he called to the others to come and help him, and together they lifted his fallen foe and carried him back into the living room behind the shop, where they laid him out on a lounge. Hurrying to the nearest drug store, John secured a doctor, fortunately waiting there for a street car, and brought him to the shop. Pushing his way through the group about the injured boy, the latter inspected his wound cursorily and applied restoratives. In a little while his patient showed signs of returning consciousness; and, on the doctor's assuring him no serious consequences from the fall need be apprehended, John gave him Stubbs' house address so he could take him home in a hack later. The rest of the boys had left on hearing the German's cuckoo clock chirp the half hour that told them school was waiting for

them, and now John, unwilling to embarrass Stubbs with his presence upon his regaining consciousness, followed them slowly schoolward with a disturbed and saddened mind.

Bill Stubbs did not return to school that afternoon, and the startling news of the bakery shop scrimmage soon spread through all the class-rooms, as thoroughly as if each youthful ear were equipped with a wireless receiving station. Everybody but the teachers knew of it within fifteen minutes of the opening of the afternoon session. Disagreeably sensible of the curious, half-admiring glances covertly directed towards him as occasion offered, John could no longer study. He was glad when at last the bell rang for dismissal. He avoided all the others in going out and went straight home alone to tell his parents what had occurred. His young heart was heavy and his thoughts confused and purposeless, and he longed for their loving comforting and true advice.

CHAPTER VII.

"LITTLE SUNSHINE"



LOSE by John's home was a very respectable-sized brewery which, started originally in a small way by an uneducated but practical and thrifty German who had learned well his trade in *dem Vaterland*, was now rapidly increasing its output and growing up with the city. Its owner, although the hardest worker about the place, was noted far and near for his extraordinary good nature and unfailing kindness of heart. This Ernest Hummelmüller, unlike most of his nationality, had but one child, a girl about a year older than John.

It would take a more gifted pen than mine adequately to describe this girl. One was tempted at first simply to exclaim in the words of a society woman who once saw her at a school commencement: "Where did she come from? She's a raging, tearing beauty!"

She was idolized by her father and regarded by her mother with a sort of reverential awe, (just as some gray mother goose might have regarded a transmuting cygnet she had unwittingly hatched out) and was waited upon by

both parents in an eager and apologetic manner that would have been laughable and ridiculous had it not been so pathetic. They seemed to think her some superior being merely lent to them for this life by the gods and to be strictly accounted for to them hereafter. She was taller than most boys of her own age, lithe and strong, with a light, clear, yet tawny skin cooling to the touch, and limbs and torso like an infant goddess. Her heavy tresses were of a dark Titian red, and running through the darker shades were innumerable hairs so nearly approaching real gold in color that the effect of the whole was startlingly beautiful. This peculiarity led later on, as she grew older and was more frequently observed in public and society, to her being designated as the "Red-Gold Girl."

Her manner was peculiarly fascinating in its originality and piquancy. She had the initiative and force of those brotherless girls who seem to inherit the mentality of their fathers, unconsciously assuming the prerogatives and assimilating the practicalities of the non-existent male heir. Of a bold and sanguine temperament, her every feature was yet lyric with a spirituelle, mercurial grace. She was forward with that modesty of innocence which attracts without repelling. She was manly, not mannish

—womanly, not womanish. Her voice was caressing and melodious, with a compelling cadence and timbre that thrilled and drew one. She moved with a jaunty, swinging step that seemed to march to martial music.

Of an imaginative and romantic disposition, she lived largely in an atmosphere of her own creation. This may or may not have accounted for her escape from the evils of coquetry and self-conceit and waywardness, which must necessarily have been developed in her under such circumstances, (as would undoubtedly have been the case with any other, ordinary, girl). But withal and in spite of all, she remained loving, obedient and natural, and altogether adorable.

Her heart was very tender, and her strongest and most noticeable attribute was her innate sense of justice. The passionate stamp of her little foot, the royal toss of her head and the imperious tones of her clear voice, as she commanded instant cessation of any unkind act she saw, towards human being or dumb animal, compelled automatic obedience. It alone disclosed the queenly temper hidden beneath her usual serene exterior and childish ways.

Her features were regular, but with a regularity of their own more pleasing than any accepted ideal or model of either the old masters

or the moderns. Her eyes, large, deep and contemplative, belied the wanton glory of her hair and the voluptuous, rosy, yet slightly tawny fairness of her youthfully-rounded face, and were jetty black and full of seriousness.

But the crowning glory of her whole appearance was her teeth. Such teeth!—so exquisitely shaped—so superbly set, and brought into a thousand different enrapturing views by the ever-changing framing of her mobile lips. When she smiled or gently laughed, the watching eye hung fascinated on their dreamy, gleaming lines, and strove in vain to analyze their charm; until her lips closed over them again like ruby curtains shutting out a glimpse of Paradise; and one sighed, as if awakened from a tantalizing, uncompleted vision.

If ever there grew a human rose, without a thorn, this wondrous maid was one. Her name was Gretchen Ernestine, but her father always called her his "*Kleiner Sonnenschein*," and the name so fitted both her looks and nature that all who once heard it, ever after adopted that endearing appellation in speaking of her.

The brewer's home, as was common in the earlier days of Chicago, was built nearly adjacent to the grounds of the brewery itself, so that Gretchen was naturally as familiar with, and as much at home in, one place as the other.

Several such homes, rearing their odd-fashioned facades in close proximity to long established breweries, far isolated from the better class of residences and deserted by the more exacting children of their former occupants for more congenial neighborhoods, may still be pointed out in that great city—domestic monuments to the pioneering spirit of those hardy, hard-headed immigrants who reaped there the first substantial fruits of their home training, transplanted to a foreign soil.

Gretchen and John had been playmates since the first dawning of childhood's reason; they had graduated together from the same common school and were now in the same year in high-school. When others of the scholars in the latter place had changed towards him, she had not, and on the day of Stubbs' signal eclipse she smiled encouragingly at John across the class-room, while her eyes snapped with her suppressed satisfaction over the sudden retribution visited upon the bully by him for his accumulation of insults. While he felt sad, she was glad.

She ran after John as he hurried home from school that day and caught up with him half way.

"Oh, John! wait for me," she panted, out of breath from running. "Don't think *I* blame

you; you were perfectly right in what you did. I have often admired your self-command under the continued abuse of that over-bearing fellow; yet I've felt all along that the clash must come, sooner or later, and I am so glad now that you triumphed."

John turned about with a mortified face in which reassurance began to struggle forth. He held out his hand.

"Ever just to everyone and always true to me, Little Sunshine," he said. "You are too kind; I'm afraid I did wrong, but the provocation was insupportable and I lost my temper."

"Poor boy; how you must have suffered. I have often bitten my lips in vexation at your restrained silence; I could never have held myself in so long in your place."

"You must remember my unfortunate position in the matter, Gretchen, and then you will understand my helplessness to retort. I could not act before."

She looked down, a pained expression on her face and a great longing in her eyes.

"Oh! if only it were not so," she murmured to herself, *sotto voce*.

They walked on side by side unspeaking, each one self-absorbed in thought. Presently she looked up, and catching his doubtful eye, burst into a rippling laugh.

“Of course it is a serious matter, John,” she smiled roguishly, “but I can’t help laughing at Bill Stubbs’ discomfiture and thinking how mad he must be; Ha! ha! ha! ha! He will now be able to appreciate the application to his own case of that fine old adage, ‘Whom the gods would destroy they first make mad’;—only he can substitute ‘pride’ for ‘the gods’.”

John gave her a grateful glance in reply. They approached her home, and, with a loyal pressure of his hand, she ran up the front flight of steps. After he had passed on she shyly watched his retreating form, and noted the heavy dejectedness of his air, the absence of his usual buoyancy of carriage. Her face clouded involuntarily, and turning with a sigh she slowly entered the house. There was no one but the cook at home, and she was busy with her pots and pans back in the kitchen. Gretchen walked from room to room disconsolate and ill-at-ease; then selected a book from the black walnut book-case and sat down by a front window to read.

She tried to interest herself in the author’s tale, but all her thoughts were elsewhere and her eyes constantly wandered from its text to the tops of the trees just visible over the roofs of the houses in the nearby street, and which she knew marked the place of John’s abode.

She had always liked and admired him as a child; they had been play-fellows and mental associates since long before their school days began; but the shadow of the "color line" had not fallen upon their young lives until within the last few months. The crisis had been slow in coming, but the disastrous culmination of the boy Stubbs' persecutions had brought the vexed question to a head and thoroughly awakened her to the realization of the social gulf that lay between herself and John, whom she was, however, wholly unwilling to give up. She began to see that much hostile criticism must unavoidably be displayed against their going together as they became older, and her tender heart was grieved, more for him than for herself. It had never occurred to her to "cut him dead" and "drop him." She was far from fashionably brought up, and had not that selfish, calculating coolness of regard and utter abandonment to the main chance which so generally characterizes the children of the *beau monde* and their socially ambitious mothers.

She tried to puzzle out and solve, as many an older and wiser head than hers had tried before and still is trying to do, the race question; but with this difference, that, while others tried to improve and elevate the status of a whole race, she herself was actuated by her

sincere affection in seeking a greater happiness for one particular member who suffered innocently from the stigma of belonging to a race to whose conditions he was fast rising superior. She sat long by the window, buried in reveries half sorrowful, half pleasant, until the descending shades of twilight wrapped the world in softened gloom and the printed lines of her open book faded slowly from her sight.

She was aroused suddenly from her abstraction by a gentle touch upon her arm, and starting to her feet in vague alarm, saw John standing diffidently before her, hat in hand. The gathering darkness scarce sufficed to hide her rising color as she stood up with that conscious feeling of mortification that comes over us when apparently detected in our thoughts of some absent one by that person's unheralded appearance.

"Did I startle you? I'm sorry," said John. "I rang the door-bell and knocked too, but no one appeared, and as I saw you alone at the window I ventured to come in unannounced. The drawing room door was open to the hall, and I trod heavily to attract your attention; but your thoughts were too busy far away to notice me.

"What were your day dreams about, Gretchen? Some fairy prince of far Cathay?"

"No, John; I have outgrown all my fairy princes and shall keep my heart unplighted for a prince of earth," she answered.

"I would I were a prince then."

"You are."

"Then won't you let me enter the lists for you?"

"That depends; 'only the brave deserve the fair'."

"You don't know how really brave I am; if you are ever in danger I'll quickly prove my claim. Just try me."

"My curiosity is very great, but the true knight should show his love by keeping his lady out of danger; not by tempting her into it," she replied gaily. "But, seriously speaking, John, have you told your parents about the Stubbs affair yet?"

"Yes and they were very much disturbed over it at first; but when I told them, as I never had before, of all the abuse and affronts piled on me for the past months by him and his obsequious followers and toadies, they were shocked and indignant, and said I did just right."

"Father will see Mr. Stubbs, senior, tomorrow and explain the whole thing to him: I feel greatly relieved, and, as I must have seemed so dull and blue to you this afternoon, I ran over at once to show you that 'Richard is himself

again.' O Gretchen! how good you are to me; how nobly you trusted and helped me in my distress!"

"When I do not it will be your own fault, John, and I hope that time may never come."

She held out both her hands to him and he bent over them and raised them to his lips in reverence.

"You are becoming quite a 'gay gallant,' I'm afraid," she laughed; "won't you stay to supper; Papa will be here very soon, and I know he will be glad to have you?"

"No, thank you—I promised to be back home again in a few minutes and I want to be with my father and mother to-night. They're worried about me and won't eat a bite till I get back; so I'll have to say good-bye now."

She accompanied him to the great house-door, and giving his hand a sympathetic little squeeze, pushed him jokingly down the steps, telling him, "To run along home and look in the first mirror he found, and he would see a 'bonny laddie' whom she liked."

He turned back abruptly half way down the steps, at this frankly affectionate command, and raised one foot in indecision; but she had run into the house in confusion and slammed the door to. He went on with a strangely lightened heart.

CHAPTER VIII.

“FOOLS RUSH IN WHERE ANGELS FEAR
TO TREAD”



WHEN John's father called next morning on Stubbs senior to express his regret for their boys' quarrel, the latter was at first inclined to take up the cudgels for his own son and to insist upon John's arrest for assault. But he was speedily convinced against his will that Bill had struck the first blow and that his prior inimical actions would tell against his case and in John's favor in any justice court trial, and the latter could not be convicted in the face of the multitude of witnesses for his side that would voluntarily appear. He was, too, impressed by the forceful and quiet determination of Jim Manning, and felt intuitively that the colored man would defeat them if they tried it on. So he thought better of it and dropped the idea of open retaliation as at present impractical and ill-advised. Affairs resumed their habitual course and sequence at the school and the fight soon ceased to be an "eight-day wonder" there.

After Stubbs' return to his class-work the feeling between the two boys was not improved by the fact that that young man, who was badly smitten with Gretchen's charms, began to note more frequently that she preferred John's company to his own. To be cut out by a "nigger," he considered an incomprehensible personal affront, especially as most of the other girls "toadied" to him and he posed as the beau par-excellence of the whole school.

In his vain attempts to "win her for his best girl," he repeatedly wrote notes to her, which, with the free-masonry of the young, were clandestinely passed from hand to hand under the intervening desks until they reached her; but if she read them at all, she certainly dispatched to him no replies by that same "underground railway." He several times verbally and pointedly solicited an invitation to escort her home from school; but invariably she politely declined the offer, saying it was too far out of his way, and that John was going past her house and would be sufficient "protection" for her. This enraged him all the more, and he vowed he would "lay for that cheap 'coon' and 'get him' at the earliest opportunity, and would humble the 'stuck-up' girl's pride at the same time."

"Goose Island," as may be seen from a map

of the city of Chicago, is an elliptical body of land formed by the division at Chicago avenue of the north branch of the Chicago River into two arms or parts, which diverging in their northwest extension until they reach Division street, there begin to converge, until they meet at North avenue and become again one stream. Thus the waters about the "island" form a sort of turning-basin, so that boats passing upstream and unshipping their cargoes on the banks of either branch, can, without turning around, proceed to the northern apex of the delta, where the circular shape of the island and the doubling together of the two arms of the river leave abundance width of channel to enable them to steer about into the opposite course and head south again. In general outline this tract of land is not unlike an immense flat goose egg, one mile long, and half a mile wide at its extreme, or equatorial, diameter—hence its whimsically appropriate name of "Goose Island."

The easterly branch of the river formerly did not exist. It came into existence right after the Great Chicago Fire, and was originally excavated to furnish clay for the brick yards then situated there and which were pressed for bricks to rebuild the burnt city. Later on the United States Government took jurisdiction

over it as navigable water and the turning basin was dredged out to its present extensive dimensions, at the north end of the "Island."

Access to the island was formerly had and still was at a very recent date, by two "swing" bridges of wood where North Halsted street crosses each arm of the river in succession, and by two other similar bridges crossing them in the same way, but east and west, at Division street. A railroad bridge, also, enters the island at its North avenue end; and spanning the re-joined branches, at North avenue, just across from the extreme northern end of the "island" itself, is still another wagon-bridge, connecting the north and west sides of the city. Several private "jack-knife" bridges, seldom used, gape on the more easterly, and more canal-like, branch at short intervals. Up to nearly the time at which this story ends, all of these various bridges were turned by hand, and, with the exception of the most southerly of the two Halsted street spans, lay close to the water and had to be opened for the passage even of small tugboats.

It has long been the custom for the city, as fast as it builds new and more modern bridges over the main stream of the river and across the lower portion of the South Branch above the fork at Market street, to move the old

bridges up the two branches, in order to give additional crossing facilities or replace the still poorer and cruder bridges already in place there, and, therefore, those connecting "Goose Island" with the circumscribing "mainland" have always been in various chronic stages of dilapidation and antiquatedness; and more frequently than not in the past, one or more of them were out of commission altogether. In the latter case those who used to live or work on the "Island" had to make shift with boats and rafts to reach their morning and evening destinations; and, also, what was a more serious consideration, the danger of destructive fires among the extensive lumber yards early established there, was greatly increased by the difficulty and uncertainty of getting the fire-engines across from the "mainland." The city, at the time of which I speak, owned no fire-boats at all. Several disastrous fires did occur there, from time to time; until an alarm from that district had come to be the terror and dread of the whole fire department.

The original dwelling houses of "Goose Island" consisted almost entirely of one and two-storied, shapeless, wooden shanties set up on post foundations and fairly filling three or four short, narrow streets (which were never swept) at the south end of the "Island," and



A CHARACTERISTIC BIT OF GOOSE ISLAND

interspersed among them were occasional low and dirty saloons, dialectically called "gin mills," in many of which the wife of the proprietor acted as bar-maid, in the old country manner. The majority of these unpretending "homes" still remain standing, in shabby irregular rows, with grassless, obstructed yards abutting rotting sidewalks, unpaved, rock-strewn roadways, or "plank roads" and infrequent, unkempt, garbage-encumbered alleys. They are shaded here and there by old, old willow trees, some having trunks twice as thick as the body of a large man, that still draw a stunted subsistence from the sterile soil and loom against the background of the sky like gnarled and twisted historians of a departed Nature. There were then no gas mains on the "Island," and there are none to this day.

As far as the eye can penetrate between its nondescript structures, not a blade of grass can be seen on all the "island," which appears to have been blighted by unlovely commercialism and sown with its cinders and ashes and debris till not a flower will bloom there.

Its "inhabitants" are the poorest of the poor. The women and children poke around the sawdust heaps for small pieces of timber and bark to use for fire-wood, and men can be observed sculling about the river in flat-bottomed boats

fishing for drift-wood. Other women and children busy themselves picking up coals dropped along the main streets by the coal wagons starting from the docks and those dropped from the trains along the complicated network of railroad tracks. Nothing is allowed by them to be wasted.

The entire aspect and general atmosphere of the "Island" and the adjacent shores of the mainland, is picturesque, both in the characteristic and blended outlines of the great variety of manufacturing plants and storage yards, the masts and the hulls of the shipping, and the fantastically-piled lumber, and in the European appearance of the poverty-stricken residence streets with bedding hanging from the windows of their houses in the day time. The sky line is diversified by tall chimney-stacks and towers, long elevators, square factories, upreared "jack-knife" bridges, immense, round gas reservoir tanks, coal-hoisting cranes and dumps, the spars and funnels of vessels and the elephantine outlines of the great hulls undergoing repairs in dry-docks. By night the fitful, pulsing, flaring reflection on the sky from the flame-topped chimneys brings out in sinister relief these myriad shapes.

Except on Sundays, the air is shrouded in a pall of sun-obscuring smoke and dust and noise-

some heat; the streets are unsprinkled, and the dust of a thousand years of toil seems to eddy about the colorless, weird-shaped buildings and whirl along the narrow thoroughfares, and to drift across the heartless, dreary, prosaic wastes. In spite of its picturesqueness and its art values from the painter's standpoint, one involuntarily shivers in passing through it, as if passing through the graveyard of romance.

* * * * *

One sultry summer afternoon just before sundown a denser smoke than usual began to waft across the reddening western rays and an odor of smouldering wood attacked by slow degrees the nostrils. This change in the air, which would have been more quickly noted in a clearer part of the city, came on so gradually that it was some fifteen minutes before any one became suspicious of its source. Then several pairs of eyes simultaneously discovered little bodies of flame creeping forth through the crevices in a lumber pile to the north,—hardly discernible in the daylight but for the accompanying smoke which formed a darker background against which they stood out. Suddenly the cry of "Fire! Fire! Fire!" arose, and was borne with startling clearness on the wind. It was taken up and repeated from mouth to

mouth far to the south and east, the flames themselves being as yet invisible from other directions on account of the intervening lumber and buildings. Every one passing within sound of the warning ran towards the point of well-understood danger, and people at supper in their homes dropped their knives and forks with a clatter and hurried out in anxiety, bare-headed and coatless.

The flames crept on, gaining more rapid headway from the strong breeze, which had now veered round and was blowing out of the southwest. Almost before an alarm could be turned in and long before a temporary stand against them could be organized by a bucket brigade stretching to the nearest river bank and men running out private hose lines from the adjacent buildings, the fire was beyond local control and working its way into the very heart of the dry, inflammable piles on piles of dressed lumber. The whole populace of the "Island" turned out, to be joined, as the minutes passed in quick suspense, by hundreds and thousands from all sides across the river's branches.

The first engine to arrive came from the east, only to find the Division street bridge swung open with a vessel stuck in the draw, and had to turn about and run south to the Halsted street bridge across the east branch,

thus approaching the fire by a circuitous route consuming over ten minutes of invaluable time. It was closely followed by a second steamer from the south via Halsted street; but the latter, after passing safely over a short length of plank road on one of the narrower streets, struck a large rock in its unpaved part beyond and broke a wheel, causing still another vexatious delay.

In the meantime two more engines reached the scene, from the west; and another crossed westwardly by the North avenue bridge just beyond the "Island," and taking up their station on the mainland, its crew carried their hose across the river in a commandeered row-boat. The location of water supply hydrants was of no particular moment, as most of the fire-engines were stationed close enough to pump water direct from the river.

The fire, by this time, threatened destruction of the entire belt of lumber yards, and a 4-11 alarm was sent in. Soon all the fire apparatus for miles around was being rushed to the rescue; and the clanging of their gongs and bells, the clatter of their horses' hoofs, the rumbling of their wheels, the pounding of the steamers' pumps, the hissing of the streams as they turned to steam in the fiery heat of the flames, and the shouts of the firemen and spectators; formed al-

together a mighty chorus to the snapping and crackling and crashing of the burning lumber and the shrieks of the engines whistling for coal and of the tug-boats struggling to dislodge vessels from their burning docks.

The scene in all its wild, chaotic fury was one never to be forgotten by those who saw it.

The heat from the falling piles of boards and timbers became finally so intense that the boldest and most seasoned firemen had to retreat five hundred feet from the nearest line of fire, and the flames mounted and shot out in mad darts in every direction through the rolling smoke, until high in the air they met and joined forces in a roaring volcano of liquid light belching forth fiery, flying boards and splinters and star-like sparks that, carried on the wings of a high wind augmented by the terrific draft created by the conflagration itself, alighted promiscuously on roofs of houses, decks of vessels and tops of stored lumber and freight cars for half a mile around. These started innumerable minor fires which hundreds of volunteers from the crowd were kept busy fighting and extinguishing.

The sky was lighted up as by a brilliant sunset and the intensity of its combustion gave to the central body of flames a pulsating, throbbing

glare that dazzled and pained the eye like gazing at the sun in the zenith.

It seemed a physical impossibility for any inanimate thing to survive for a minute in the path of the devastating flames, or for any mortal being to brave its terrors and live; yet both these miracles did come to pass that night.

At the first spreading of the alarm John and his father were startled from an early supper. Reaching for their hats, they bade Jemima stay and watch the house, and covered the two blocks between them and the rapidly igniting mass in two minutes. There they lent their aid to the amateur efforts to stay the progress of the flames until the arrival of the fire brigades, when they were forced to become excited but helpless spectators like the rest. Here they were joined by Mr. Hummelmueller, the brewer, and many others they knew, amongst the throng being several despairing owners of the doomed properties. The noise and clangor were so great that they had to scream to make each other understand. When they had been standing there about ten minutes they were made aware of the presence of Mrs. Hummelmueller and Jemima, who, unable to resist the fascination and grandeur of the spectacle, had followed them. After some expostulation with these two at their exposing themselves so unnecessarily,

the whole party moved back a space from the front ranks to be clear of the crowd, and there continued to watch the fire over the heads of those in front of them. While gathered there in momentary silence, who should burst in upon them in a state of feverish excitement but Bill Stubbs.

"O, say!" he shouted, "do you know that some of the firemen think that they have several times seen a human figure standing up on top of one of the lumber piles, just beyond the flames and in their path? They're afraid some one has been caught in the fire!"

The faces of his auditors blanched at the news and an uncontrollable restlessness attacked them.

"But he could escape towards the north, could he not?" a listener asked.

"No; the line of the fire is moving in a semi-circle or crescent, and if anyone is really there he will be quickly and effectually hemmed in on three sides," said Stubbs.

"But the north side is still open."

"No; it is not. Flying sparks have ignited the yards a block ahead of the main flames, and an independent fire is already raging there, cutting off all hope of his retreat in that direction."

"Well, I hope the firemen were mistaken," put in Mr. Hummelmueller. "By the way, Will,

how do you happen to be here at this hour, so far from your home?"

"Why, I came over to see Gretchen; didn't you know of it?"

"I did not—but where is Gretchen now?"

"Isn't she here? I thought I should find her with you—she must have got back by this time."

"Back from where?"

"Oh, I forgot you didn't know. You see, a lot of us were playing among the lumber piles, and when we smelt smoke we all ran."

"Which way did Gretchen go?" her mother interrupted in alarm.

"I don't really know; in our hurry we all got separated, but I guess she is somewhere around," vouchsafed the boy.

Mrs. Hummelmüller was just starting for home, to assure herself of her daughter's safe return there, when a fire-marshal came up to them hurriedly. Calling aside Mr. Hummelmüller, whom he knew personally, he said earnestly:

"Mr. Hummelmüller, I want you to take coolly what I'm going to tell you, as there may be nothing in it for you to worry about more than others, but there is certainly some one caught in this hellish trap, and it is a *woman*. I have sent three different firemen up to the

roofs of buildings overlooking the flames, and they all report the same thing."

"*Gott im Himmel! aber dieses ist fürchterlich!*—Who can it be?" cried the German, relapsing in his horror into his native tongue.

"Have you seen your daughter within the last half hour, sir?"

"No; but you surely can't suspect that the woman your men saw is she?" faltered the father.

"I hope not; yet one of my men who lives on the 'Island' and knows her street dress, was struck by its similarity to that worn by this woman penned up in the fire."

"Anyhow, whoever she may be," he added, "I'm going to ask for volunteers to try and beat a way through to her, and I wish you would try to locate your daughter at once and report the result to me within the next ten minutes."

"I will have my preparations for attempting the rescue of this poor woman all made by that time," concluded the marshal.

Just then John, who had climbed a convenient tree, tumbled to the ground in his haste to get down and came rushing towards the others, crying:

"Gretchen's in the fire! Oh! Gretchen's in the fire! Quick! quick! I saw her just now! I saw her on top of a high pile of boards, try-

ing to attract attention by waving her red sash over her head! Oh! what shall we do? come on! Come on! I'm going after her right now!"

The people began to crowd around him in dumbfounded consternation, doubting their own senses. Mrs. Hummelmueller fell on her knees, rocking from side to side and moaning:

"Ach! mein Kind—Mein kleines Kind; es ist verloren!" Her husband was stricken dumb with anguish and gazed vacantly about him. The shock was almost too sudden for realization, and he seemed not to comprehend what others were saying.

Many around him at once volunteered their services for the rescue. They moved wildly and aimlessly here and there, trying to devise or suggest means of approaching the fiery prison of the doomed girl; but the more experienced marshal held them all back and, calling some of his own men, collected together several lines of hose from the nearest engines, and set about stationing their pipemen so their streams would all fall as closely as possible on the spot where the girl was last seen. With another group of firemen he sought out the shortest available path to the point of the victim's immolation, and directed all the other streams he could muster so they would "play" along the path, one beyond the other. So that there was, as

nearly as possible, a continuous, overlapping fall of water upon it. Then he started the hook-and-ladder men to hacking right and left of the path and to pulling down the burning boards ahead of them as they advanced. The pipemen played their streams upon these as fast as they were dislodged.

The police kept in check the excited crowds at the police fire-line, well behind the fire fighters themselves, but half a dozen men whom the marshal had picked out from those volunteering, followed close behind the little band of chosen department men, and with these were Mr. Hummelmueller, John and Jim Manning and Bill Stubbs. Just before the start was made Mr. Hummelmueller had shouted out that he would give ten thousand dollars to any man who would save his daughter, and spurred to activity by this tremendous reward, several unthinking individuals had broken through the lines and pressed too closely upon the flames, only to be forced back with singed hair and scorched faces. The police cordon forcibly prevented any more such attempts, and none but those designated by the marshal himself were again permitted to place themselves in useless danger. The heroic band fought stubbornly on along the path outlined for them by the axmen and the pipemen's streams, but their prog-

ress seemed a snail's pace to the impatient and horrified watchers.

The girl was not again seen, but John, in the purely animal sagacity of his agony, seemed to feel instinctively where she must be, and he urged the men on repeatedly towards their goal. The heat around them was now terrific, the smoke rolled over them; and every few minutes some fireman would fall back gasping for air, only to return to the fight when he had caught his breath again.

Noticing that Stubbs kept well to the rear and did more talking than work, John became enraged and asked him, "why, in God's name, he had been so cowardly and ungallant as not to have stayed beside Gretchen in the first place and so made sure of her safety?"

Stubbs hotly retorted that, "talk was cheap, and if he, John, was so d—d brave, he had better, prove it *now*, especially since he was so 'stuck on' Gretchen."

Wheeling on him, John dealt him a blow on the neck, and screaming above the roar of the conflagration, "You contemptible cur! I will!" he darted across the open space behind them and along into the crowd. He ran to the nearest house and stripped a blanket from the first bed he saw. This he saturated all through and thoroughly in the water from a leak in one

of the hose-lines, and flew back with it across the fire-line again to where he had left the handful of dauntless rescuers and pushed on with them. They had fought their arduous way to within a few rods of the girl's fearful vantage point, which had now caught fire in spite of all the efforts of the pipemen and was commencing to smoulder and blaze like a funeral pyre, when John, who was in the lead, mysteriously disappeared. He had jumped across and over the flaming debris directly in front of the firemen and turned so quickly to the right between two huge burning piles that the eyes of the rest could scarcely follow the rapidity of his movements.

His foster-father sallied after him, but the others seized him and restrained him from his folly by main force, while they worked forward with the increasing fury of derangement, fighting their own exhaustion as well as the blaze confronting them.

"My God! he is a dead man!" shrieked Mr. Hummelmueller; and Jim struggled with his comrades, who fought to check his mad impulse to rush into the very heart of the soulless, destroying element.

The coveted goal towards which all their eyes fearfully turned, burned faster and faster, but the little company of daring heroes became

so exhausted and were so overcome by the torrid temperature and belching smoke, that it was effectively stopped and driven back inch by inch. A loud groan went up from the distant crowds as the particular lumber pile on which their hopes and fears were set burst into one solid sheet of bright-red flames.

The fire-marshal ordered his men forward with oaths, but they had reached the limit of human endurance, and though they responded desperately, they could advance no further.

So, while the streams of water were still kept spurting upon the point they had tried so vainly, though heroically, to make, the drenched and scarred would-be deliverers dragged each other reluctantly backward to the police-lines. There they stood or sat, overwhelmed in body and spirit, watching in helplessness the destruction and human catastrophe they were powerless to avert.

When John leaped forward and away from the other men he had no plan but the fixed idea and determination of reaching Gretchen somehow and in any way, and either rescuing her or dying with her.

Finding a narrow, open space to the right and just beyond, he had plunged blindly into it, and, dodging in and out between the consuming squares of timber, he had succeeded in

covering nearly half the distance to Gretchen when a furious rain of fire drove him to the ground.

As he went down, blinded and smothered by the smoke, his head struck a raised mound of earth. Extending one hand to reconnoitre his position, he found nothing but vacancy where the ground should have been and his arm descended to the elbow in an open hole. Confused and half delirious as he was, he intuitively felt lower for its bottom, and then it suddenly flashed upon his waning senses that he knew just where he was. He remembered that the children of his neighborhood had, some months ago, dug a miniature, cave-like tunnel at least a hundred feet in length under the lumber piles, using stray boards and scantling they found in the yards to line it and support its roof.

Hope sprung up anew within him, and he formed the daring resolution of creeping through the mimic subterranean passage, once so thoughtlessly wrought and now so tragically useful, and trying to get to his imperiled school-mate from its other end. The air was cooler and less filled with smoke in the bore; and, hastily summoning all his strength and courage, he began to crawl forward underneath the heated earth. The illumination of the surrounding blaze shining in at the further extremity

guided him like a beacon. He could hear the roaring detonations of the flames and feel the vibration of the falling, crashing lumber above him, but, mindful of nought but his one great purpose, he pushed on through. Looking out cautiously upon his arrival at the opposite opening, his heart beat tumultously; for he recognized the place of Gretchen's awful incarceration only a few feet away and with one entire side and part of another side ablaze. He emerged from the "burrow" on his hands and knees to keep his face in the clearer air near the ground. Wrapping the now smoking blanket over his head and all about him, he drew a long, deep breath of air, started to his feet, and made a last, mad rush for the burning square ahead.

In those days of less valuable land and more available space, lumber was not always piled, as it is today, in solid blocks, but was frequently built up into hollow squares, the boards overlapping each other at the four corners, so that there was room on all sides to catch the hands and toes between the boards and thus climb to the top, which was generally about ten feet from *terra firma*. The children used to make-believe in their play that these hollow squares, affording partial privacy, were "houses" and that their sides were lattices. This one in which Gretchen had taken refuge was such a hollow

square and a proportionally safer retreat than the solid blocks.

Looking between the lower boards, John could now see the object of his search, lying apparently unconscious but unburnt upon the ground in its centre. Unappalled by his terrible surroundings and over-joyed at his un hoped for luck, he immediately scaled the one side of the pile as yet unignited and jumped down inside. Shedding the blanket in one shake of his body, he threw it over Gretchen and grasped her shoulders, raising her into a sitting posture. Kneeling down, he placed his own shoulders under her breast, so that her head and arms drooped down over his back. Then, with a mighty strain, he rose from his knees and staggered with his human burden to the single corner not on fire. Using both hands and feet to climb with and trusting in the pressure of her body against the lumber triangle in front of him to hold her on his shoulders and prevent her slipping off, he began the perilous, slow ascent.

Twice he wavered and nearly lost his hold, and at any other point but the corner, where there was sufficient room for her body between him and the seething boards and where he could get a firmer foothold from being able to step now on one side of the square and now on the

adjacent side, he must have fallen and both have been lost.

The top boards were hot to his touch and pained his hands; he was forced to hold his breath to avoid inhaling the heat waves' poison; but at last, with a despairing wrench and groan he got one leg over that final obstacle that barred their egress.

He stood erect for a single dramatic second; then, half jumping, half falling, with both arms about the girl, he struck the ground with a heavy thud just as the wall they had quitted burst into a glorious fountain of golden flames. Without the strength or will-power to carry her weight any further, he dragged her after him with tortured muscles, and with a quick, jerking movement backed himself into the mouth of the tunnel and pulled her in head-first behind him. The solid square of lumber directly in front of the tunnel's opening fell with a thunderous crash a second after they had entered it, completely blocking it up with a solid mass of living fire. Easing the form of the still unseeing and unhearing girl along to the centre of their narrow haven, John dropped limp beside her, utterly unable to stir hand or foot after the horrible ordeal, the physical and nervous strain, he had undergone. For fully ten minutes he lay thus in the inertia of reaction.

Breathing was difficult, but still possible in their peculiar position of fresh imprisonment, and his first thought on recovering a measure of equanimity and vigor was of the necessity of looking into his companion's condition. He proceeded to examine her carefully. Her face and hands appeared to be slightly blistered and her dress was singed in spots; her eye-brows were gone, and her hair burnt off on the end where it had hung loose; but he could discover no other or more serious hurts about her. The only doubt that remained was as to whether she had inhaled the flames at all, the most dangerous possibility and the hardest to decide about from mere appearances.

Taking courage then, he put his lips to hers, which were open, and sucked the breath from her lungs intermittently, in an effort to force an artificial respiration, and tried to wring out any water there might still be in the blanket across her face. But she seemed to be in a stupor, almost a comatose state, and gave no signs of life except a light, slow heart-beat, which he could faintly detect. Knowing that it might be hours before they were found or could leave their temporary shelter, he racked his wits for some practical means of reviving her.

He began himself to suffer from thirst and



"FOR A SINGLE DRAMATIC SECOND HE STOOD ERECT"

the girl's lips were scorched and parched, and he realized that what they both needed imperatively was water. But where was he to find it in this dry hole?

There seemed to be absolutely nothing more he could do for her; but in moving backward and forward in nervous vacillation, his foot came in contact with a slight projection above the earth floor, or bed, of the tunnel, and on investigation he saw that he had uncovered the top of one of those old wooden, street water-pipes first laid in Chicago—long before iron ones were thought of. This one was evidently part of a private water system belonging to the lumber yard itself, which once got its water direct from the river, using its own water-pumps. (Curious specimens of these interesting relics can now be seen in the historical collection at the Chicago City Hall.) He tapped on it gently and then listened with his ear held against it. He fairly cried out with delight when he distinguished the unmistakable sound of moving water. These wooden pipes had been discarded by the city itself years ago, but by some fortunate oversight or through some clandestine intent to escape paying city-water bills by continuing to use river water gratis, this one, which he had expected to find empty and

dry, had been allowed to remain a "live" pipe, and they were saved.

Taking out his big, boy's jack-knife, he cut a splinter from one of the overhead boards and whittled it into a round plug. Then patiently turning his knife round and round, like a gimlet, with its point inserted in the treacherous surface of the old, rotten wood pipe, he carefully bored through it till a tiny stream of lukewarm water spurted out and up. He waited until a small pool had formed around the opening in the pipe and then plugged it up. He laid Gretchen's head tenderly on his lap and wet it profusely with the water he scooped up in his cupped hands. He forced a little water down her throat. While waiting for her to revive he relieved his own burning thirst with copious draughts.

In a short time her eyelids commenced to flutter and her lips to move, and at last, with a choking gasp, she stirred; her eyes tremblingly opened, and she looked up in a dazed way into John's anxiously smiling face, while he bent lovingly over her and softly kissed her poor scorched brow.

The human-worm-hole which they had appropriated for their underground refuge was just of sufficient height to admit of their sitting upright without striking its roof with their heads,

and John gently placed her in an easy position with her back against the tunnel wall and her limbs crossed under her. Removing the splinter plug from the hole in the pipe again, he joined his palms and fingers together, forming a very fair drinking cup, though of doubtful cleanness. He let the water which fountained from the aperture fall into this, and lifting his hands to her lips, begged her to drink. This simple manoeuvre he repeated several times. When she could drink no more and he had reslaked his own thirst, he replaced the plug, taking off one of his shoes and hammering it in tightly with light blows of the shoe-heel, and then sat down himself close alongside of her. He had expected her upon regaining consciousness to cry out and become hysterical, but she made no sound and asked no questions. She simply sat quiet, contemplating him with meaningless glances and uncomprehending brain. Then, without warning, as John watched her in renewed alarm (this time for her reason) she raised one hand slowly to her hair and, letting it fall again half way, drew her arm softly and unconsciously about his neck, like a weary child, and laid her head upon his shoulder with her face upturned to his. For a moment her eyes gazed inquiringly into his, then the tired lashes drooped, her breath came sighingly and evenly,

and she fell gradually into that dreamless slumber which kindly Nature lends to extreme mental and physical fatigue.

John had loosened wide her dress at the throat in his first, frantic efforts to revive her, and as he presently passed his arm around her waist to hold her safe and comfortable, he saw now and again, through the disarrangement of her corsage and its underlying linens, her rounded, virginal bosoms' rhythmic rise and fall. Both fascinated and ashamed, he averted his gaze. His young blood leaped to his neck, and flooded his cheeks and brow; and, too modest to attempt to rearrange her disordered garments, he drew the blanket, now dry, caressingly over her, and with contending thoughts and emotions, awaited the hour of their release. He lost all record of time and must have fallen asleep; for he remembered nothing more until he suddenly perceived the light of day streaming in at the unblocked, eastern mouth of the bore, and found himself lying with his own head on Gretchen's knees, his face pressed between her two soft hands and her lips on his.

She started wild-eyed like a frightened doe, and he felt the salty, tickling moisture on his cheeks of tears not shed by him, and wondered at them. She had not refastened her dress, and in the quick surprise of his awakening, the agi-

tation of her heart showed plainly in the rapid flushing of her full, ivory-smooth throat and in the tumultuous swelling and reswelling of her breasts, now clearly disclosed as she bent over him in the dawning light. She looked away guiltily and seemed confused, and he sat up quickly and defensively, mortified at his unintentional neglect of her.

"I'm afraid I make a poor watch-dog," said he apologetically.

She turned her face toward him again.

"Were you watching, John? Where are we, and how did we get here? I have no recollection of coming here—all I remember is falling between those awful burning rows of lumber walls; then all was black to me until I opened my eyes again in full realization that I was still alive, but in some mysterious place. Did you save me? How? Tell me about it."

As unassumingly as he could, John related to her the whole story of her miraculous rescue and escape, from the time he first recognized her on the lumber-pile down to the present moment. She did not interrupt him, but listened to the improbable tale with wide-distended eyes and indrawn breath.

When he ceased she sat speechless and absorbed in thought for a few seconds, as though to take in the full measure of his heroism and

its reasons. Then with a steady yet timid gaze, she seemed to draw him to her by her eyes alone. She slowly extended her arms to him, and the words came:

"And did you love me so? Dear John, will you kiss me?" she softly faltered.

A sweet shock of indescribable desire passed through him and engulfed his innocence as he yielded passionately to her embraces, and he gave her the first love-kiss he had ever pressed upon the lips of any living woman. She clung to him and laid her burning face against his; then let him go. After a little she laughed:

"I must be a sight, John!—what do I look like?"

"Like an angel, to me," he replied, unhesitatingly.

"Then let us fly this unheavenly place," said Gretchen; and, without any prudish turning of her back upon him, she began to readjust and smooth out her clothing as well as the cramped space permitted.

"Now, lead me on, my Sir Galahad," she mockingly commanded.

John crawled out first and drew her up from the opening; and there they stood, all alone, in the blinding glare of the sudden sunlight, with naught for blocks around them but the low-burning, smouldering and charred remnants of

the once imposing millions of feet of lumber, as though arisen, like Lazarus, from the dead. And the simile is not unhopefully offered here; for their *hearts*, at least, were born anew.

It is not given to many, even in this late day of scientific and financial prodigies, to say, with Byron: "I awoke one morning to find myself famous," yet, in a local way, that is what now happened to John.

Picking their tortuous path as best they could over and around the blackened but still dangerous debris, they haltingly wound their way with stiffened limbs towards the part of the "Island" where they lived. Soon they came upon the usual crowd of sight-seers, who hailed them with shouts, and as they approached closer they were greeted with a roar of surprise and incredulous, wondering congratulations and a rush of eager hands and faces, that threatened to drown them both in a friendly human maelstrom. The search for their bodies had been abandoned a little while before; only a few firemen were left there to watch for the final extinguishment of the last tiny spark; and their parents had been conducted to their respective homes broken-hearted, dry-eyed and completely unmanned and subjugated by the immensity of the calamity that left both homes entirely childless at once.

Borne on by the ever-augmenting multitude,

John and Gretchen pushed their way through still other crowds to the little brick cottage.

Jim and Jemima, startled from their breakfast by the approaching din, ran to the door, filled with nameless, dreadful surmisings. With agonized hearts they waited, crouched as for an expected mental blow; until the clamorous concourse, parting reluctantly in the centre, allowed the two survivors to come forth into view.

When John's parents saw them they could not believe the evidence of their own eyes. At best, they had hoped for nothing more than the recovery of the gruesome, disfigured bodies of the two lost children; yet here they came, alive and walking, like a miracle wrought of Christ! For an instant the entire assemblage stood mute and palpitating, their eyes turned on Jim and Jemima and awaiting the crisis of the final act. Then the four principals in the little drama rushed into each others' arms, and the crowd burst into cheers dissolved in tears.

There are human experiences that can never be justly delineated and sudden emotions of the heart too deep to gauge with ever so subtle a pen, and the meeting between these four fate-favored beings has no competent recorder this side the Recording Angel.

A discreet, tactful messenger was at once sent off to bring Mr. and Mrs. Hummelmüller

to the cottage. When the latter, half an hour later, were brought there in a carriage (too weak from grief to walk even that short distance) Jim had to stop them at his door and there break by degrees to them the good news that the children of both families were still living, just as though he were preparing them for the shock of tidings of death. For unexpected joy can kill as surely as unexpected sorrow.

"Friend HummelmueLLer," he said, very quietly, "before you enter this house I want you and your dear wife to muster all your strength and fortitude; for you will need them now as you have never needed them until this hour."

Gretchen's father laid his hand on Jim's shoulder to sustain his own poignant misery.

The bitter, humble appeal of a crushed and blighted spirit was in his eyes as he searched those of this neighbor who had suffered with themselves.

"Tell us the worst, friend—we can imagine no heavier burden than that we already bear. What is it you are afraid to tell us? Have the bodies of our children been found?"

"Yes," replied Jim, "and there is something more to tell."

Gretchen's mother began to shiver and choke and she feared to look at him; but something in the expression of his face awoke her mother's

intuition, and the terrible, excruciating longing of her mother's heart spoke. In a scarcely audible whisper, hesitating at every word as if to delay the dreadful answer it must bring, her lips, rather than her voice, began:

"*They cannot be alive!*" There was no hope in the spoken question—only agony and love and suspense.

Taking a hand of each in his to uphold them, Jim, who could not as yet trust himself to speak, simply nodded his head gravely and affirmatively, and then drew them into the parlor to seat them and give them time to recover from this rekindling of the ashes of their hopes. He must still further prepare them for what was still to come. The couple quickly subsided into a stunned, expectant stillness, and waited there like two helpless children.

The blinds had been purposely closed together, with only a row or two of their shutters open, and the light in the house was dim. Gretchen had previously been put to bed in an adjoining room and her slight burns and abrasions dressed and bandaged; and John sat there beside her. Out in the parlor Mrs. Hummelmueller, unable to stand the uncertainty any longer, begged piteously through her streaming tears that "they might be allowed to see their daughter at once, no matter how terribly she

was burnt and injured, or however horribly her pretty face was marred."

So Jim, putting his finger to his lips to adjure absolute silence upon them, bowed solemnly and lead them slowly into the fateful bedroom.

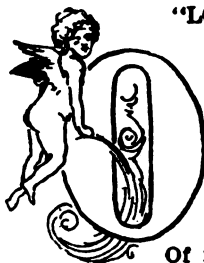
John and Gretchen had been warned to make no demonstrations, and when the three adults entered, Gretchen lay impassive with closed eyes, her forehead wrapped in a large linen handkerchief, one bandaged hand and arm stretched out before her on the coverlet and the other drawn across her face, half hiding it. John had gently slipped from the room upon the entrance of the others, and now remained looking on unseen in another darkened doorway. Jim stepped aside, and going to the one window of the little bedroom, drew a row of its shutters into an oblique position, admitting slightly more light from outside. Then, moving into the farthest corner, he watched in reverent silence this tremendous reunion of hearts.

With heavy, wavering feet and supported by her husband, whose tears now coursed unheeded down his face, the mother slowly tottered to the bed and sank upon her trembling knees beside it—too terror-stricken to utter a sound. Blinded by tears, she could not look for the dreaded injuries; but feeling an arm steal around her neck as she crouched there, she

quickly raised her eyes and looked—to find no scars at all, but in their stead a happy, dreamy smile bent on her. Mere words cannot depict the scene that followed. Only those who have once felt the light of their lives forever quenched in deadly darkness and every hope and faith crushed out, and have then been suddenly awakened from their unutterable despair to find their unbearable grief and agony and their haunting sorrow all passing away like a dream—can even hope to understand it.

CHAPTER IX.

"LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM"




H! the days are gone, when Beauty bright
My heart's chain wove;
When my dream of life from morn to
night
Was love, still love.
New hope may bloom,
And days may come
Of milder, calmer beam,
But there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream:
No, there's nothing half so sweet in life
As love's young dream.

Though the bard to purer fame may soar,
When wild youth's past;
Though he win the wise, who frown'd before,
To smile at last;
He'll never meet
A joy so sweet
In all his noon of fame,
As when first he sung to woman's ear
His soul-felt flame,
And at every close she blush'd to hear
The one lov'd name.

No—that hallow'd form is ne'er forgot
Which first love trac'd;
Still it lingering haunts the greenest spot
On memory's waste.
'Twas odour fled
As soon as shed;
'Twas morning's wingéd dream;
'Twas a light that ne'er can shine again.
On life's dull stream;
Oh! 'twas light that ne'er can shine again
On life's dull stream.

—Thomas Moore.

OON they were all gathered together at late breakfast in the little house; and how good everything tasted after the recoil of their minds from their benumbing tension! Both John and Gretchen were plied with endless, eager questions, and had to retell over and over again the wondrous story of their unique adventure, adding fresh details of both facts and feelings at each essay. And John was deluged with praise and thanks at every turn by the visitors who crowded in upon them, while Jim and Jemima looked on in unspeakable pride and with prayerful gratitude to God.

In the latter part of the afternoon Gretchen was taken home after a fond farewell to John; and the days that followed were big with young-love's revelations. In the meantime, Mr. Hummelmueller insisted upon instantly paying over to Jim for John's benefit the ten thousand dollars he had so distractedly offered the day before for his daughter's rescue. John himself persistently refused to accept it personally, saying that what he had done he would never have done for *money*. Jim was finally induced to accept the trust upon the advanced plea that the interest upon the amount could be used

toward defraying the expense of sending John through some eastern college upon his graduation from high-school; a desideratum to which he had longingly but hopelessly aspired. From this aspiration he had hitherto been deterred by both the high cost of the undertaking and the probable social ostracism, if not absolute rejection by the examiners and university faculty, which the disclosure of his color would precipitate.

Within the week, he and Gretchen were back in their accustomed seats in the high-school; and Bill Stubbs, the unplaced, found his personal stock vastly depreciated. *Now* he no longer dared openly voice his resentment at Gretchen's choice of companions, and, moreover, his hereditary, bull-headed insolence was cowed by the masterful light in John's half-averted eyes. Even a cheap fool can learn wisdom in experience's expensive school.

As John and Gretchen's minds expanded, their hearts but followed suit. There are two human educations—one of the mind, the other of the heart; and the last, though but indifferently taught or cultivated in these days of multitudinous trusts and labor unions, is the higher education of the two.

Bill Stubbs was not interested either in the one or the other. He went to school simply be-

cause he had to, and looked forward with the ignorant longing of the would-be *parvenu* to the hearts and purses he felt himself destined to ravish after the last school bell should ring for him.

He was not absolutely bad, but just an extreme example of those *ultra monde* youths who seem to suck in selfishness with their mother's milk.

Yet, even such have the making in them *sometimes* of vast worldly success, through their inborn inability either to see or consider the inalienable rights of others, and their fortunate (?) paleness of conscience.

John and Gretchen now became more inseparable than ever, and, but for a wistful sadness which would at times creep into the latter's heart and lie reflected upon her face, their dreams of youth were all that youthful dreams should be.

One night when the air was balmy with the breath of autumn's aromatic first decay, they met at Gretchen's house and sat on the back porch beneath the early harvest-moon.

With a delicacy unusual in one so young, John had heretofore avoided any direct reference to their close relations at the time of the great lumber-yard fire, but tonight Gretchen herself introduced the subject by saying:

"Well, John, while it is pleasant enough to be living, I should have been—yes—full as well content to die that night we slept together in the tunnel."

"Why?" he asked her in surprise.

"Something tells me so—I—I cannot explain," she hurriedly replied.

John's heart beat fast, and he bit his lips to keep back the impassioned words which strove for utterance upon them. All he allowed to pass them was:

"I'm glad you did not die."

She began again:

"They say that life contains at best more pain than pleasure, and that the supreme moment of our greatest happiness comes but once. Then why tempt fate by living on if you have reason to believe that that moment has already come and gone and left its imprint indelibly stamped upon your heart?" she asked.

"Because 'it is not all of life to live, nor all of death to die.' All through our lives we see visions and chase transitory shadows. Why? Because there is within each sentient thing some seed of immortality that must await, not only the blossoming, but the harvest."

"Then you believe in immortality?" she ventured.

"Certainly! There never was, nor could

there conceivably be, such a beginning as the beginning of this universe, put in motion simply for the purpose of having it continue and proceed to a goalless end, like the running down of a boy's spinning top. There could be no possible or plausible object in procreating a world for no better purpose or greater gain than to go through the task of governing infinite motions and changes, simply to end back in the nothingness of its pre-creation. What would be the incentive? A fool wouldn't care to attempt it—much less a God."

"But tell me, John; what is love—that power higher still, which the wise-men say can drop a feather on a human heart and tip the world's scales against a thousand years of guilty, heartless splendor?"

"Love, like religion, can not be explained, but still can be most deeply felt and plainly understood."

"Then you consider feeling a higher human attribute than thinking?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Talking of beginning and ending, why is it that everything seems so correlated to everything else in this world of ours, that there is no beginning and no end to anything except as comparatively regarded?"

"That is only another indication and proof

of immortality. If there were no such state as immortality, all things we know could be traced back to their beginnings and forward to their endings, regardless of the intricacies of their correlativeness with other things."

"Well, well, well! you're getting too deep for me with your original metaphysics, but what is the final solution of it all?"

"The solution of it all, my dear young lady, is Love—the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end, the conception and the culmination, the desire and its own fulfillment. *Verstehst du nicht?*"

Gretchen started and blushed, but proceeded again in her search for the key to the infinity of the finite.

"Ah! love—love? From what do you deduce your so remarkable conclusion that love governs the universe?"

"From all things, abstract or concrete, but principally because we are never supremely happy except when we possess it and never so supremely miserable as when we have lost it, and *happiness* is the ultimate goal of every animate thing and the only discoverable key to the secret of the universe; ergo Love is It—q. e. d."

"Ah! let me see: then you must believe in love—may I ask whether in the abstract or in the concrete?"

"In the abstract as to *existence*, but in the concrete as to *you*."

"Ye gods! was wary, cold philosophy ever more neatly trapped, and made to serve the ends of cupid? John, you are so very clever you may hold my hand for a while." Hand met hand in that firm pressure which *can* mean everything or nothing, good or bad, heavenly blissfulness, ordinary politeness, or fawning venality; or, as in this case, can interchange the threads of life for intertwining.

The fickle moon, who never looks the same two nights together, rode in and out among the drifting clouds, calm in her regal glory; the city's sounds were hushed, or fell like distant waters' rippling on the ear; and daylight, with its harsh exposure of unsightly things, had relinquished its dominion to poetic Night with her softened shapes and impressionistic skylines of transfigured trees and buildings. For an interval neither one spoke.

Have you ever sat, or walked alone, with one whose simple, silent presence was *enough*, and felt that that one could *understand* your thoughts and heart, though not a word was spoken? There is a language of the heart which needs no verbal medium, a telepathy of thoughts and emotions that has existed between soul-mates and physical-selection mates, from human

beings down to the lowest in the scale of animate things, since Adam ate the apple.

The soul has windows, but their protecting lappets are opaque. He who would look in through them must first clarify the surface with the diamond of kindred soul.

A dog howled in the distance and the lovers' mutual meditations were broken.

"I wonder if that howl presaged the death of anyone?" commented Gretchen, jokingly.

"Yes, the dog's;" returned John, "his unhappy prophecy may prove a boomerang to the poor pup if he don't quit his yawping."

"Speaking of death," put in Gretchen, "do you remember those immortal lines in Longfellow's 'Resignation'—

"There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair?"

"Yes, and these lines, it seems to me, are really sadder than death itself; for death has its compensations. The breaking heart that's left behind creates, in self-preservation, an idol of memory at which it may forever fall down and worship. As Goethe says in his 'Wilhelm Meister'—

"Something the heart must have to cherish,
Must love, and joy, and sorrow learn;
Something with passion clasp, or perish
And in itself to ashes burn."

Gretchen shivered, and lowered her eyes before his earnest gaze.

"I cannot bear to think of love and death as being so closely associated," she whispered; "it seems too much like shrouding the happiness of our passion for the living in the terror of their prescient loss, and so keeping death with us always."

"God is indeed merciful in withholding from us all foreknowledge of the future, or all happiness would be, even as you say, but the happiness of a living corpse."

"You are becoming terrible!" cried she, "oh! do not reason so horribly! If you wish me to follow your arguments, do not let them lead that way!"

"Nothing is terrible which can be analyzed. The only really terrible thing in all of life is loss of *love*. When a man bases his one great hope of happiness upon one woman's changeless smiles and constant, enduring approbation of himself, God help him in his froward self-conceit! As a rule, no woman really loves her husband, but regards him simply as a human means towards some lower or higher personal end," said John, looking at her sadly.

And which of us who have grown older, and perhaps wiser, since our own adolescent belief in the undying tenderness of some one particular

woman, can honestly say that his utterance was not inspired?

Gretchen was very young and, so far as women can ever be sincere with men, she was sincere with John. She had not as yet been taught by other, older, women that man is only a game to be played on woman's own, special, financial chessboard. All women are, of necessity, more or less mercenary; because she whose special province it is to receive, is always in a position to coldly estimate and damn the total of the contributions of him whose province it is to give, i. e.: the giver's ambition is limited to his own ability, while that of the receiver has no personal limit.

A man generally gives his love without price. A woman always, sooner or later, asks, and tries to exact, a price for hers.

She often sells her heart—a man but seldom does it. Perhaps much of this deplorable condition of their psychological affairs is but the natural result of woman's inferior position, politically and commercially, in the present state of the body politic, and will gradually disappear with the coming of her sure future admittance into absolute equality of opportunity with men, in every line of thought and endeavor, and her resultant greater economic independence. The present unjust social systems of the world

cannot stand, anyhow, and will soon be changed, either voluntarily or by force.

"I'm afraid you have a very poor opinion of the average woman, John." Gretchen spoke with some coolness.

"So much so that when I find an exception to the rule I know how dearly to appreciate her," he hastened to explain, in modification of his severe views on femininity in general.

"And have you yet found your exception—your bright particular star in the female galaxy—your—your petticoated paragon?"

"'Thou saith it,' " he laughed.

"And is she pretty?"

"Let me see."

"See what, you goose?"

"Turn your face a little more to the moonlight."

"Oh!" She looked at the moon and then at John, and shrank back into the shielding shadows.

Presently she resumed:

"Why do you talk in parables, John?"

"Because I am afraid of shocking you with the naked truth of my real estimation of you, if plainly and unpoetically uttered."

Gretchen became thoughtful and, from the shadow, watched his face, with a covert, shy tenderness in her own he did not see. Their

conversation grew constrained, and shortly John excused himself on the plea of having to prepare his lessons for the morrow and arose to bid her adieu, taking both her hands in his in a frank way that cooled while warming her.

"Good-night, Gretchen. Don't forget me, and don't take too seriously my pedantic discourse."

"Oh—that? I believe you more than half meant it as a curtain-lecture for me."

"I only meant to show you how different you are from the majority of women."

"That's better—well, good-night, then, if you must go."

When the sound of his retreating footsteps died away, Gretchen did not at once go into the house, but sat alone in the big porch-chair, rocking to her reveries.

"I think he loves me," she kept repeating to herself, "but something holds him back. It cannot be anything that I have said or done—it is something deeper, and darker."

Then, in a flash, there came to her again the realization of the social gulf that lay between them in the eyes of the rest of the world. She bowed her head in her hands and softly wept.

"O, if he only knew how little I regard that!" she communed with herself. "He has always

been a part of my life. We are bound together by so many ties, it cannot be that Heaven designs to break them all for just that one piteous accident of his birth! I never think of him as a Negro. He does not look nor talk nor act like one, except that his complexion is very dark and that he seems to shrink from me with a sense of modesty, arising probably, from his long and continued brooding over his own sad condition in life.

“Oh! I cannot understand it! I can only wait and pray.”

She got up from the chair sobbing, and entered the house, going direct to her own chamber to hide her tears.

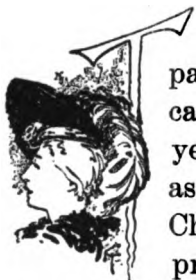
John walked homeward with down-cast eyes, a bitter hunger tearing at his heart. A cold sweat stood out upon his forehead and he shook with a freezing chill, in spite of the warmth of the night. Pleading a headache, he, too, went straight to his room, and there threw himself headlong upon his bed, biting the pillow to keep from crying out in the agony of his contemplated renunciation. And throughout the long, dark hours that followed, hid from all eyes save those of God, he wrestled with his tortured, rebellious heart as Jacob wrestled with the angel.

A moaning wind came beating from the drear expanses of the distant lake; the moon

forsook the world behind black, driving clouds;
darkness descended like a pall on everything;
and love's short, bitter-ending act was over.

CHAPTER X.

"THE LEOPARD AND HIS SPOTS:" HOPE'S VALEDICTORY



TWO years went by, as years will pass in spite of all that mortal man can do to stem their tide—two years filled with such pleasures as youth alone is given to know. Childhood has its perquisites and prerogatives of happiness, as has every stage of life's journey; but youth has dreams that leap by bounds.

Can you remember when you were sixteen? Does my question awaken in you no cherished recollections—no half-forgotten griefs?

Longfellow cries: "Let the dead past bury its dead!" But it cannot; for dead thoughts and emotions never really die, but are only buried alive, to arise again and confront us anew on many a subsequent occasion.

There are persons hardly past the middle life who are constantly harping upon the lost pleasures of the past. There are others for whom no pleasure once experienced casts any softening light or shadow into their later lives. Both are wrong. The past, the present and the future

have each its appointed place and province, yet no one of them is perfect in happiness without the other two.

You who are *white* live but one life. They who are *born black*, through no possible fault of their own, have a dual life—one what is; the other (in imagination) *what might have been*, had they been born white.

John was now in the senior class at high-school and about to graduate with high honors; yet, for the past two years—indeed, from that very night he left Gretchen on the porch and fled to his room in all the mad infatuation of his baffled first-love—he had endured an unconquerable condition of nervousness, doubt and misery such as ordinarily situated lovers cannot conceive. Awakening to the tremendous disparity between his brain and his “social” status, he was stung by a thousand poignant darts of hopelessness and resentment that you and I know not and can never know. The world began to change about him; things and persons seemed to subtly alter in their phases and faces, as he now saw them; and his own love appeared to grow more hopeless day by day.

Gretchen herself did not change towards him, but that very fact only put him the more on his guard, as it added to his responsibility towards her. He felt strongly that even the reward of

priceless happiness to himself could not justify him in bringing certain ruin upon the one he loved. He tried desperately to withdraw away from her society; but *she* would not have it so. She ignored every hint of his, and only clung to him the more closely with each repulse; until he fairly gnashed his teeth in his melancholy, like a tortured spirit in hell. Hers was one of those rare human hearts that can love but once, and that once forever. There are such hearts! Besides, she understood instinctively that it was his racial position, and not his heart, which drove John in his attempts to keep up an appearance of estrangement from her. It all went down in nothingness before her unabashed fealty to him; and struggle as he might against it, he knew in his own heart of hearts that he was fated to love, and to be loved by, her. What was he to do? Which way should one turn in his awful predicament? The world has never yet found a satisfying answer to such question. The doctrine that all men are created equal has never been successfully upheld, outside of mere political equality. "The leopard cannot change his spots," nor the black man change his color. "Like murder, it will out."

Graduation day approached at the "Central High," and John, despite his mental worry and heaviness of heart, had so far surpassed all

those around him in intellectual growth that he was, perforce, to be the valedictorian of his class, the deputed writer of the prize essay. Yet his very isolation of scholastic elevation but drove home to him the cruelty of his racial inequality with the others. The news of his new eminence was bruited about the city in ever-widening circles; and when commencement day finally came, hundreds of persons, attracted to the school's exercises by the promise of the unusual spectacle of a Negro valedictorian, crowded the "hall" to see and hear him. There was not even standing room left when the hour struck. The usual program of pedagogic address, class singing, essays, declamations, et cetera, was followed by the audience with somewhat impatient good-nature; until the school's principal stepped forward on the stage and announced the final number on the program, the reading of the valedictory—before the diplomas were given out and the work of the scholars should be over forever and the class ceased to be. All eyes were bent curiously upon John as he came slowly forward to the edge of the little "stage" and seriously and diffidently bowed his head before those doubly critical minds expecting, as they did, nothing short of genius, yet ready at the first slight indication of mental weakness to "lay back" in luxurious

superiority and say to themselves, "Pretty good for a nigger."

No one, not the principal himself, knew what the subject of the essay was, and even the graduating class leaned forward with tense expectancy to catch its title when it should drop from John's pale lips. With the abruptness of the unprecedented it came: "Indeterminateness." People looked at each other in consternation and gasped, while John read on, holding his ribbon-tied manuscript with tremulous hands, as follows:

"The boundaries of thought, unlike those physical and geographical things which man can accurately measure, are indeterminate. Man's world, in which he really lives, is not the outward world around him, but the world of constant, never-ceasing thought. And this world has no beginning and no end, but in unconscious, perpetual motion, goes on while human life exists. At best it is but kaleidoscopic and dream-like, and never to be trusted to repeat again exactly the same outlines or colors in the same mutual juxtaposition.

"Science tries to teach the exact result and to trace back the causes producing that result; but, after all the hundreds of years of study and experiment by man, science has awakened a hundred new doubts and raised a hundred new

questions for every one it has solved or answered; and the ratio of the indeterminate to the determined has steadily increased from age to age. Today we know far less in proportion to what we *see to learn* than ever. Which only goes to prove the immortality of creation and of the Master Mind and Power which, no matter how far or high we may have progressed, has ever foreseen our requirements and placed the material for all our wonderful discoveries in waiting readiness for us a million years ahead of the slow and painful meanderings of our comparatively insectile brains. Great as the mind may be considered which charms discoveries from their hidden haunts in anything animate or inanimate, how much greater must be that *Mind* which first placed them there to be discovered.

“We are, all of us, nothing but students. We can *create* nothing—It was all there before us. The best and wisest of us can but simply translate in some new and more original way, or grasp and hold some hitherto-hidden application of, the truths that always were.

“And this indeterminateness is, in many ways, a distinct and direct blessing to us. Take for instance, life and death. Who could endure to live if he were certain of the hour of his death? And who bear to be born if he could

foresee the trials destined to his lot? Then, again, what incentive could anyone have to ambitious effort if he could know in advance his ultimate success or failure? The effort would not interest him in itself, since in either case the end was sure. So, 'where ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise.'

"The heart of the mother who so fondly gazes on her new-born child, is filled with the glory of his imagined future achievements. Fifty years later, when the actual result of that child's earthly career has been determined past peradventure or redemption, the mother has died with those early dreams of hers for him all unfulfilled and left him to his proven mediocrity. Would she have been any happier if she could have known all this in advance?

"Indeterminateness is and always has been, the greatest spur to progress the world of men has ever known, and has, accordingly, a corresponding greatness of value. Without it we would all stagnate on one common, easy level, with our interest in life exhausted before it was fairly excited. The hunting, far more than the quarry, attracts us, if we only knew it.

"There are those who strive for great things, and others that 'also serve, who only stand and wait'; but with the one, as with the other, the future is brightened only and solely by expecta-

tion of good not yet assured—the indeterminateness of each yet-unucceeding moment.

“Again, if the results of battles could be foreseen by men, there would be no battles; for the weaker would never go to war with the stronger predestined, as they would be, to defeat; but would retreat or compromise in time. And here indeterminateness is a curse indeed.

“If geniuses and inventors could see ahead of them the rocky heights and bottomless abysses of their preordinate ways instead of the single, simple, upward step necessary to fill each passing hour with progress, they would hesitate, aghast at the idiotic sublimity of their own presumption, and we should be, as a people, a thousand years behind our present state of advancement.

“Without *uncertainty*, all human efforts would cease tomorrow and anarchy result.

“Love itself feeds on its very doubts, and hell has no such terrors for us now as it would have were its actual determinateness provable.

“We who are gathered here today shall never again be thus gathered together to a man. Our roads shall part before the sun goes down. We each and all must go our several ways, subservient to the will and law of that one Power alone Who is *determinate*.

“Memory itself shall fade, and millions yet

unborn shall have begun to tread in our long-familiar paths, ere yet the echoes of our last, faint footsteps can have died away and our little pains and pleasures be no more.

"If there were no other proof, indeterminateness alone teaches us that there is a *God* and that that God is as merciful as wise in the knowledge He withholds from us while here.

"We only know, 'What ever is, is right,' and that the past is but as yesterday and the grave is but tomorrow."

Not a sound was heard during John's delivery of his essay, and the entire audience sat with silent, gaping faces.

When he stopped and quietly took his seat, not a person moved. The principal sat with his forehead leaned upon his hand, lost to all surroundings. The big clock on the wall ticked on in its little record of eternity; and when the people shortly recovered from their abstraction, there was no applause, but instead they spoke to each other in whispers, looking about in half-guilty fearfulness.

Noting this, John's face grew red and white by turns in his inability to understand the meaning of such a reception. Then a strange thing happened—one of those unaccountable actions of a common, inspired impulse in a homogeneous audience. All those at the gathering ap-

peared to rise from their seats automatically, as from the pressure of a common spring. With one accord they pressed forward to the platform, and as they passed by it in an unbroken line, one by one they held out their hands to John in silence as he instinctively rose to his feet to meet them. Then they went as silently back to their former seats. When the last handshake had been given, John sat down again and gazed at them all with wild, unbelieving eyes for a moment. Then he got to his feet and tried in vain to speak, burst into tears, and hurriedly left the room.

And then the spell was broken and pandemonium broke loose in the old hall; and the storming cheers, applause and stamping of feet shook the very plaster loose and caused the passers-by on the street below to congregate in an inquisitive, questioning crowd. While the excitement was at its height, Gretchen, who was in the graduating class on the platform, slipped softly out after John, and, by hurrying, overtook him in the lower hallway of the school-house. Hearing her pursuing footsteps, he turned around abruptly just as he was about to open the street-door, and in the dim light of the gray old hallway awaited her approach with a beating heart and a flushed, bewildered face. He did not, even now, comprehend nor

appreciate the extraordinary effect of his essay upon its hearers.

Gretchen did not falter a second in her determination, but, going impulsively up to him, took his face in her two hands and stared fixedly and passionately into his eyes.

"O, John!" she cried, "how could you do it? It was wonderful, wonderful! But, oh! dear heart, how sad, how sad! I have watched you mutely suffering for months—and it nearly broke my heart—but, oh! I did not *dream* that one so young as you could already have suffered so *much* as to have written *that!*"

Her rosy face was white now, and the slow tears flowed against her will. Her lips trembled piteously, but she held her ground and would not let him go.

John took her hands and covered them with contrite kisses, saying as he released them:

"I am so sorry to have pained you—you who alone can read my heart aright, and for whom I would gladly die.

"May God reward and keep you, for you *know* that *I can not!*"

Then, unable longer to control his emotions, he forced his feet to turn aside, and with a stifled sob passed out the door, leaving her standing immovable, there where he had left her, with outstretched arms; and on her face

was the agonized look of one who had “watched *him* as a friend would watch beside a dying friend.”

CHAPTER XI.

BILL STUBBS COMMITS THE UNPARDONABLE SIN



JOHN'S diploma was delivered to his parents for him after he had left the hall. They soon followed him home in some trepidation; and there they greatly reassured him with the enthusiastic encomiums of the auditors, which they retailed him. His heart rebounded from its abnormal sensitiveness, and he could now contemplate the whole affair in its true proportions. He even began to feel the thrill of conscious victory.

The following summer vacation was a memorable one to him. Although he would, possibly, have been admitted to several universities or colleges upon his high-school diploma alone, he preferred to pass the regular examinations for entering Yale University. The preliminary examinations were held in Chicago, for the western applicants for admission, early in the summer, and these he passed without "conditions"; so he was now qualified for the freshman class, with no necessity for "brushing up" or "cramming" for any further, final "exams" at the university itself in the fall.

This left him entirely free to enjoy his whole vacation time, untrammelled by studies and with full mental relaxation; and he threw up his hat in boyish exultation.

The fund put aside in trust for him by Gretchen's father at the time of the fire, had now perceptibly increased in amount, and its re-investment to still better advantage, with what his foster-parents could afford to add to it, would furnish an income amply sufficient for his tuition and modest needs while at college. His foster-parents were prospering and did not need him at home. He had, therefore, no financial worries and looked forward to his college career with pleasurable exhilaration.

No man or woman, howsoever old, can think back upon the period of his or her university matriculation all unmoved. It is, at least, a high-light of the past; and the bright pictures of imagination and the momentary glory of achievement that were so pleasant then, can never lose their precious hold upon the aging heart.

John felt as few who are not black have ever felt, the rainbow radiance of that mental view; but o'er it all there often fell the old dread shadow of his racial inequality.

Mind you, I do not broadly claim that every Negro mourns over his race so bitterly as John

did. He was an exception to the usual run of Negroes, bred to serve as laborers or servants; but so it was with him.

And yet, with it all, the days were halcyon enough, and friends were kind and life held many sparkling gems of interest for him—"full many a gem of purest ray serene." Like some young, wild animal running free, he stopped to nibble where the prospect pleased.

After her tender, pathetic appeal to John in the hallway of the old high-school through whose portals they were never again to pass as scholars, he almost gave up his struggle against the dictates of his own heart, and saw much of Gretchen, both at her home and in the parks and distant fields and woods through which they frequently wandered together on sunny days.

Who would repeat in chilly type all that the birds sang to them, all that the flowers hinted, all the idle, joyous words that passed between them, and their youthfully serious platitudes on life? These things, seemingly so trivial and unimportant, were but new translations of the same old tale of love.

And yet they did not speak of love to each other openly and directly. That pure restraint which holds the idol of the heart too sacred to be idly broached in words or idly handled lest

it be broken or desecrated, kept back the sentences that oft-times trembled on their lips. But Love has a thousand eyes, a thousand kinds of tongues, and ears attuned to myriad hidden meanings. He has no need of mere human words to make his young disciples see and hear and understand after he has thrown his mantle o'er their shoulders.

Ah, Love—Love! Thou art so young, so frail! Thou diest on the nuptial bed! There is no love after marriage—only self-interest, disillusion, repulsion, hatred and reaction; or, more happily, esteem, conscientious copartnership, admiration and unselfishness; the last the greatest of them all. The heart still revolves about its little sun of happiness, but more slowly and in a less ecstatic orbit. Fortunate indeed are those to whom a child or more be born; for then the shadow of the old love falls once more upon them, and the evanescent, intangible felicity of their former youth is transubstantiated into enduring maternal and paternal tenderness of affection. In the glamour of their children's lives they live their own lives over again.

But while John and Gretchen were thus collaborating in the production of their living

idyll, serene in their lover-like belief

"That Nature never hints in vain,
Nor prophesies amiss,"

Bill Stubbs was far from idle in another way.

He had graduated with the rest in John and Gretchen's class at the high-school, the professors, acting as a single body, obligingly marking his final examination papers just high enough to let him slip through, in pliable compliance with their mutual desire to be forever rid of each other.

Stubbs had no collegiate ambitions, he openly opining that there was "a hell of a lot more money in 'sticking pigs' than in writing books"; and, as "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," he set about devising some scheme to injure John, if possible, before he should have started for Yale.

He hated him cordially, with a hate that fed upon each new triumph of the latter, no matter how honestly and unaffectedly it was brought about and borne.

Taking advantage of the purely conventional hospitality of the Hummelmuellers, he called at their house frequently, and tried to make himself at least superficially agreeable to them. He was not unaware of the fact that they tolerated him simply out of ingrained politeness—just because he was a human being

and an acquaintance; but such half-hearted welcome did not feaze him in the least. Totally lacking in proper respect for others, he had, himself, no self-respect.

The rôle of interloper and eavesdropper just suited him. It gave him an abortive sense of power to sneak up softly behind others whom he suspected to be talking about him (or, for that matter, about anything else of a confidential nature), and to note the embarrassment in their faces on suddenly becoming aware that they had been unwarrantably placed by him under his personal espionage. He seemed to be lost to all sense of personal shame, actually believing that what he did was considered by those around him as evidencing his "smartness."

He employed this "talent" to such good purpose on the "Island" that he eventually overheard some slight reference to John's first arrival there as a foundling. This gave him his needed "cue," and it was not long before he had wormed the whole story out of a certain estimable but garrulous old woman whom Gretchen had visited, with himself as escort, on an errand of mercy.

He later visited alone this loyal old lady, and posed to her as a warm friend of John's; and he so gained upon her confidence by some

petty, inexpensive act of chivalry towards her, that she took it for granted that he was a *gentleman*.

She supposed, since he appeared to be so intimate with the Hummelmuellers and was a recent classmate of John's, that he must be already in possession of the facts of John's early history which were so widely known to the "Goose Islanders"; and she presumed, naturally enough, that he was not lacking in that universal discretion which had heretofore sealed the lips of all her neighbors when in John's presence, as to the latter's being only the adopted son of Jim and Jemima and not their own, natural offspring.

Had she dreamed for a minute of the use to which Stubbs intended to put her delightfully reminiscent information, she would have given up her false teeth rather than to have uttered a word of it to him.

Now, it is a mark—an encouraging indication, of the inherent goodness of heart in the human race—that, though the fact may be known to hundreds who daily come in contact with them, the cases in which children legally adopted in their infancy are deliberately told by others that those whom they have learned to regard with love and respect as their own rightful parents are really bound to them by

no ties of blood, are very few and far between. This is the one secret which the many instinctively keep from the few; the secret that even a *woman* can keep from those whose hearts its disclosure would so deeply and unnecessarily wound, even though it did them no *material* injury.

Sooner or later most adopted children find out their true relations to their foster-parents; but fortunately, their sad enlightenment generally comes later in life, when they have grown old enough to *understand* and *appreciate* the strength and nobleness of the love that first took them in, and still holds them fully as dear as children of their foster-parents' own loins might have been to them.

Then the blow is softened to the adopted ones by their recollections of their foster-parents' long, unselfish devotion; and while their hearts may bleed for a time, the wound is often healed without a scar.

More often than not, where the secret is prematurely disclosed to those concerned, the disclosing is done by some unthinking school-mate and companion or some half vicious, envious child,—who “know not what they do.”

But to *premeditate* in cold blood such untimely divulgence and then *clandestinely* carry out such design for *revenge* alone, is, thank

God! very, very unusual—much more so than downright murder! And no one needs to be told why. It is the “Unpardonable Sin.”

About a week after Bill Stubbs’ pregnant interview with the old lady on the “Island,” John came home late one night, after escorting Gretchen back from a down-town theatre, where they had both shed honest, heartfelt tears over the pathetic play of “Hazel Kirke.”

At the door Jemima handed him a soiled envelope that had come through the mail addressed to him in an evidently disguised hand.

Attaching no particular importance to it, he kissed his foster-mother good night and took it with him into his own bedroom, where he laid it unopened on the bureau while he undressed. He forgot it for the moment in his fresh memories of the agonies undergone by the doomed but devoted mother in the story of Hazel Kirke when her own son lay dying in her arms, and all the while kept hoping that he might meet *his own* mother in Heaven; and she *dared not* tell him that he was even then in that mother’s living arms, held tight against that mother’s own breaking, dying heart, that still must go on denying itself and him, even as his little feet were entering at the Portal of the City Celestial, from which she could no longer hold him back—through which portal

she even could not pass beside him hand-in-hand, as she so fervently prayed to do.

"Could anything in real life be so sad as that?" John wondered. His fingers were reaching for the key to turn out the lamp, when his gaze again fell on the envelope. Mechanically he took it up and turned it over in his hands. He could think of no one who was likely to have written him, as he had no regular correspondents and certainly none who wrote so peculiar a "hand." Still he suspected no evil in it. He tore open the envelope. It contained but one soiled, single sheet half covered with badly written, illiterate words. He looked at first for the signature. There was none. It was that cowardly, criminal, snake-like thing, an *anonymous* letter.

His brows bent over it in a puzzled frown, he began to read it. Its curt, damnable contents were as follows:

"Mistur jon Maning,

Deer Sir:—the riter hoo miens wel bi yu sins yu wunc dun him a gud favur now taks his Pen in Han to tel yu sum thin yu ott to no for yure own Pertekshun the Nagurs wich yu think ar yure Parunts ar not so—you can ast them yoursel, *this is strate.*

a frende."

John's first impulse was to tear the letter to pieces in indignation; then its uncouth wording and spelling made him laugh, and he hesitated. He read it over again, and his face paled

at the thought of its possible greatness of significance. It began to worry him. He thought rapidly:

“Could there be any truth in its bald assertion? Were Jim and Jemima not his own parents, after all? Who was *he*, then? To what previous condition of life might he not really have been born?”

“Oh! it must be all a malicious lie—a practical joke! Who could have sent the letter? Why? What ‘protection’ did he need?”

The poison in the note commenced to rankle within him; yet hopefully he thought:

“Ah! then perhaps he was not a *Negro* at all!”

His heart oppressed him; he could not breathe; he threw open the window-sash and looked out on the night for inspiration. The veins on his forehead pulsed with excitement; the quick trip-hammer of moral fright pounded in his heart.

“He must look into this!—No, he must not! How could he ask his *mother* such a question?—she who had loved him so!”

“Why had not his parents—his good, tender, loving parents, told him all this before, when they knew how he suffered from the taunts of his schoolmates, who called him ‘a nigger’?

Probably because there was no truth in that vile note, and he was their own son."

He called up before his mind's eye the faces of his foster-parents, and going to the mirror, compared his own face with his mental picture of theirs.

"No; there was certainly no traceable resemblance between his and that of either of the others!"

"But he must be cautious—he must not hurt their feelings or appear to doubt them. God! would this suspense never end? What was going to happen to him now?"

"Well; he would try to sleep and forget it all. To-morrow, maybe, he could think more clearly. But *could* he sleep now with this terrible revelation hanging over him, suspended there like the sword of Damacles? It was horrible—horrible!

"Was he actually *himself*, or was he someone else? Why not someone else? Was it not strange after all, that one should be one's self, and not someone else? How would it seem to occupy the body, be controlled by the spirit, of another?"

His brain reeled and whirled; he thought of his foster-parents, of Gretchen, of God. He fell down upon his knees and prayed for

strength and guidance to combat his awful indecision—to decide aright and wrong no one.

Hours passed and he had not stirred. At six o'clock in the morning Jemima, coming in to call him, found him sound asleep on his knees beside the unused bed. His prayers had been in a measure answered; for God had "given his beloved sleep."

He awoke with a start, and gazed at his foster-mother confusedly, his mind still a blank. Then memory came knocking at the door of his consciousness, and he threw himself onto the bed, trembling and afraid.

Jemima, agitated in her turn by his unaccountable behavior, smoothed back the hair from his forehead and whispered: "What was it John, dear—a bad dream? Go to sleep again and forget it. I'll call you a little later. There is no need of your getting up so early now, anyway."

He "turned his face to the wall" and cowered under the bed clothes in a "blue funk." He dared not face her, in his fear of betraying his dread secret, but gave her some smothered, irrelevant reply in dismissal.

Greatly perturbed, but humoring him in this strange new whim of his, she "patted" the spread about him and, sure now that something distressing was on his mind, she tiptoed out

of the room, promising herself to keep a watchful ear and eye upon him from the kitchen.

As she brushed past the foot of the bed, her foot struck something that faintly rustled, and, looking down, she espied the unfolded letter where John had dropped it in his semi-delirium.

Wonderingly she stooped and picked it up, remembering she had handed John some such letter the night before. With a mother's privilege she glanced casually at its message. Her eye was caught by the prominent words "Nagurs" and "Parunts." She took the letter along with her to the kitchen and called to her husband. There she explained to him how she had found John asleep in prayer and his singular reception of her, and held out the letter to him, saying she was suspicious of it. He requested her to read it aloud, as he had accidentally left his spectacles at the shop the night before.

As she read to him the last three lines of the poisonous note, a great rage obsessed him. He tore the letter from her hands, and, carrying it to the kitchen window, read it himself, holding it up close to his near-sighted eyes, to make sure there could be no mistake about its purport. His clenched, powerful hands rose above his head as he gave vent to his terrible anger with fiercely shaking arms, calling down

such anathemas upon the head of the writer of the letter as would have curdled that person's very blood to hear them. He glanced about him belligerently, in an elemental, Ethiopian ferocity, seeking for someone to destroy. He turned to speak to his wife—she had fainted.

At once his fury left him, and he gathered her up like an infant in his great, leonine grasp and laid her on their bed. He got water and hartshorn to revive her, and applied these restoratives, trying to forget his own eating despair in ministering to her greater misery.

Suddenly she opened her eyes and attempted to get up. He forced her gently back upon the pillow and pushed the door to with a backward thrust of his foot, lest John should awake again and hear them.

Then *her* heart broke and, throwing her arms about his neck, she cried and cried and cried, her husband mingling his own tears with hers and cursing the contemptible interloper between each paroxysm of grief.

But even grief and agony cannot last forever, and at last the two miserable ones could talk together calmly.

“What should they do now? Should they deny the truth of the letter's statement? Or should they risk telling John the whole story? Would he forgive them at this late hour for

their loving deception? Would he still *love* them? Would he, even involuntarily, turn from them now because *he might not* be a Negro, while they, themselves, were surely black?"

"How could they meet him tranquilly? What could they say to him? If they did not tell him the truth now, would he not curse them if he found it out later by himself? Had they best return the letter to his room, and let him approach the dread subject himself; or should they make a quick, clean breast of it, and get it over with?"

"Oh! why, of all things, must *this* cross be laid upon all their lives just as John was leaving them for college? Would he not become estranged from them now, in that distant place and among new and higher associates?"

"Let them pray, and perhaps the good God who had never yet deserted them in their times of trial, would put into their hearts what they must do!"

Rising from their bended knees at last, with that calmer determination that comes after prayer, they proceeded arm-in-arm to John's door and opened it softly, so that, unseen, they might feast their swimming eyes on him once more before the awful moment when they must meet him face-to-face, and he would come to

know "the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth."

For God had told them, in His Own mysterious way, to tell it to this, their beloved son—had told them in His language of the soul, that He would not "let this bitter cup pass from them."

There came no sound from John's room. They knocked on the door to attract his attention, grown timid and deferential now in their new humility. No answer. They pushed open the door wider and looked in. The room was vacant—*He was gone*.

Breakfast unthought of, they distractedly made ready to follow him.

"Where? — Anywhere — everywhere! He *must* not be allowed to go away alone like this! What desperate thing might he not do in his present mental state?"

They hurried about the "Island," asking those whom they met as quietly and indifferently as they could, if they had seen John. No one had, it seemed. Their uneasiness grew more importunate, and they had about determined to notify the police by telephone, when Jemima happened to think of the possibility of finding him at the Hummelmuellers; and, though they felt that that was probably the last place John

would have been apt to go in his desire to hide his trouble, they ventured there as a final resort.

To their surprise, Mrs. Hummelmueller was waiting for them at the house door.

"Yes," she replied to their stammered question, "John is here."

After Jemima left his room, John had abruptly recollected that he had not put away or secreted the fatal letter, and he got up to search for it. He could find it nowhere. He pondered anew:

"Here was a new complication! Could Jemima have found and read it?"

He listened at the partition and heard his foster-parents' wild lamentations. He shivered, and cried out under his breath:

"O God! be merciful!"

"It was too late! They must have seen the letter, and—yes—its bold insinuations must be true; for *they* would never have been so affected as that by a refutable lie!"

"Well, then; it was all over! What next? Would his foster-parents believe he could be so base, so ungrateful, as to glory in the faint chance now disclosed to him of proving himself not a Negro while remembering still that they were black? Was it not more natural to expect that, since they had fathered and moth-

ered him, they must have known that he, too, was a Negro?"

"He must have more time to think it out. He *must not* witness their agony at this unexpected dénouement! He *could* not look upon his mother's shame, his father's humiliation!"

"And, again, *who*, now, was he, himself? He still had no evidence at all that he was white. Why not more reasonably a Negro? How did he come to be there in the first place?"

He could no longer control either his mind or his body. The once-loved room became unbearable to him—a prison. He dressed rapidly and leaped out through the window. But outside he commenced to wonder again, doubtfully:

"Where now? What did he want to do? What *could* he do? Go back and confront his former father and mother? No!"

"Ah; he had it now! He would go to *Gretchen*. He must see her *at once*, and tell her *all*; and if then *she* turned from him, he was lost, lost, lost!—*And then to the river!*

His mind grew numb; a vise seemed pressing round his brain; and yet his mind worked, spasmodically and beyond any governing of it by his conscious will.

"Well, what of it all? It would soon be all over with him now! What was one man

more or less in the great world?—A drop of rain in the sky—a vigintillionth of an iota of the great scheme of the universe!”

“Bah! it was easily done—one needn’t suffer much—a look, a leap, a splash, a momentary, choking spasm, a spreading, circling, ripple on the surface of the water, and—The End!”

“How easy! Why had he not thought of it before? He was now only an encumberer of the earth, anyhow—an ever-present source of pain and miserable regrets to both himself and others.”

“What did life all amount to? Just a struggle that generally ended in failure and disease!”

“Oh! he was so tired, so tired!—if only he could rest—could forget!”

“But Gretchen! No, he *could* not go without seeing her once more. Maybe she would, all-unsuspecting, let him kiss her ‘Good-bye.’ She would not know it was to be his last ‘Good-bye’ forever. God! it was hard to leave *her*!” Tears came to his dry, burning eyes.

All this time his feet, ignoring the ravings of his brain, were subconsciously, but steadily, carrying him onward towards Gretchen’s home! He looked up at the house, amazed to find himself in front of it.

“How came he there; he had no recollection

of coming. Was he mad? Or was he walking in his sleep?—When would he wake up?"

Yet, like one in a dream, he rang the door-bell without hesitation. His actions, his words, were all instinctive. His faculties, his senses, seemed to be performing their functions regardless of any mental or muscular volition upon his part. He did not know till *after* each movement, each word, was already made or spoken, that they had happened. He simply found himself doing and saying what he did and said. It was as if he were idly contemplating the words and actions of another being.

It was still only seven o'clock in the morning, and Gretchen had not yet arisen. Mrs. Hummelmueller came to the door herself (her husband having gone early to the brewery, as was his wont), and, instantly sensing from his vacant "stare," his unkempt appearance, his colorless voice, that something was radically wrong with the boy, conducted him quietly into the library without betraying to him her own alarm.

John had simply said to her in a dazed sort of way:

"I want to see Gretchen; where is she? Tell her I *must* see her, and at once."

He had no consciousness of the unconventionality of the early hour—no thought for any-

thing but to see Gretchen. It was now his one fixed, clear idea. It was the one visible goal his blinded spirit could perceive ahead.

Mrs. Hummelmueller left him and hurriedly summoned her daughter, warning her in advance to be courageous, to be cool and collected, as she feared that John was under the influence of some temporary aberration.

Gretchen deftly slipped on a blue silk Japanese kimono and her slippers, and, without waiting to "put up" her hair, ran down the wide stairway. At the library door she paused for a second to observe John. He was seated in an arm-chair, his elbows on his knees, his face in his hands, the picture of mental degradation. He heard her and looked up slowly, with a haggard, hunted, cringing face and glance.

In that instant Gretchen changed from a girl to a woman. She had been brought abruptly to the parting of the ways twixt youth and womanhood. Although her heart bled for her lover, even without knowing what had befallen him, she was not afraid. The bravery of motherhood was come upon her.

Her face was calm, even majestic. She came slowly towards him in her loose draperies, her gorgeous, sun-lit hair falling all about her brow—like a blue and gold angel in a vision.

John watched her in a stupefied inaction, a

great, holy wonder in his blood-shot eyes. She spoke no word, but passed one soft hand endearingly through his unbrushed locks, and taking a hand of his in her other one, led him a captive to the leather library lounge, and made him lie down upon it.

She brought a light chair, and seated herself beside him, taking his hand in hers again and gently stroking it. He seemed stricken dumb, waiting patiently for her to speak—just as a “true believer” might have awaited the prophetic utterance of some worshipped oracle in the days of old.

At last she asked him in a low, consoling tone: “What is it, John, dear?”

He drew his hand away from hers, and hiding his shamed face in both his palms, gasped out between them in the strained voice of one utterly broken in spirit: “Oh! Gretchen! I’ve lost my father and mother!”

The girl’s face blanched; her form grew rigid, then relapsed. This was terrible! frightful! She was not prepared for such a blow. She had expected trouble, but not *death*! It stunned her. She strove for delicately tactful words in which to question him further.

“Are they then, *dead*?” she faltered.

John sat up-right quickly.

"Dead! Dead! Oh, no; they're not *dead*. Who said they were dead?"

Gretchen gave a great gasp of gratitude. Her heart, which had almost ceased to beat, now began to pump furiously. "Why, John; you just now said you had lost them."

"Yes; I've lost them; but in life, not death!"

"Tell me all about it, dearest," she coaxed.

And John did. His wandering senses returned to him at this wonderful girl's wooing command, and he told her all.

A tremendous sigh of relief welled up from Gretchen's tender heart as she divined the real situation. She cried a little, but smiled at him through her tears—as beautiful as a "sunshine-shower."

When he had finished, she sat down alongside him on the big lounge and put her half-bare arms around him, laying her warm, rosy face against his. He knew *then* that all his fears of her forsaking him in his sorrow and shame were groundless—ephemeral things blown away forever upon the breath of her undying love for him.

He raised her farther arm, and taking its tapering wrist in one hand, he drew the back of her own slowly to his lips and kissed it lingeringly, his other palm supporting hers; her other arm about his neck. His eyes were

lowered before her in reverent adoration. She looked away across the room towards the great white light of morning streaming in at the window; and upon her face was that dreaming glory of perfect peace and love which passeth understanding.

"What shall I do, Gretchen, love?" timidly he asked at length.

"Go and tell your foster-parents that you 'know all,' and that it will make not the slightest difference between you; that you but love them all the more now that you have found out and can realize their true nobility—You do, do you not?"

"I do! But what will all the people around here think of me when they learn of this thing?"

Gretchen smiled adorably.

"You need not worry your head about that, dear heart; everyone on the 'Island' has already known it for years; that is, everybody but you; but they were, every one of them, too generous, too kind, too fond of you for your own self, ever to tell you of it. They are your *friends*, John—never fear."

And thereupon John gained the strange experience of hearing from his *own lover's* sweet lips his first account of the memorable, but still unexplained, incident of his unheralded coming to the Mannings on that Christmas Eve of long



"AND UPON HER FACE WAS THAT DREAMING GAZE OF PERFECT
PEACE AND LOVE THAT PASSETH UNLESS ENDING"

ago. In a way, she had known more about him, than he had known about himself.

Just as Gretchen completed the story, Mrs. Hummelmueller announced Jim and Jemima, and ushered them at once into the library.

John sprang up, Gretchen following him. His foster-parents stood close together before him, with downcast, appealing eyes, just like two naughty children caught in some mischief and waiting their merited reprimand or punishment. Jemima lifted up her face; her eyes were horror-haunted; her husband groaned aloud.

For one breathless moment all the *dramatis personae* of the pathetic scene stood pale and motionless as marble statues.

Then John stepped forward quietly, his face working with suppressed emotions; and placing an arm about the neck of each of his foster-parents, kissed them both upon the mouth, saying simply, but with an unmistakable sincerity:

“Mother! Father! I love you!”

CHAPTER XII.

“ABSENCE MAKES THE HEART GROW FONDER”



OLD Doctor Time came round every day with his big, slow internes, the Hours and his nimble little nurses, the Minutes, and, before long, all of the little family at the cottage were mentally convalescent, their hearts all the stronger and more loving for the crisis through which they had just passed, to come forth so purified and true.

Autumn rolled around at last, and with it came the hour of John's departure for New Haven, a great event to more than himself alone. Many of his old schoolmates and neighbors gathered at the depot, bringing flowers and little parting gifts for him, and poor John's heart was very full.

His foster-parents and the Hummelmuellers followed him into the sleeping-car with many final, fond adjurations, and sat beside him until the conductor's call of "All Aboard!" cut short their last farewells. Gretchen passed out of the car the last of all, John accompanying her to the vestibule. For a moment the two were alone together; then—what Gretchen did there will

never be told, but should John live a thousand years *he* never could forget it.

The train sped on with its customary burden of human hearts. Grief, penury, despair and woe—joy, affluence, hope and happiness, knocked elbows with vice and virtue, with curiosity and apathy, wisdom and ignorance, philanthropy and cupidity—a little world on wheels. In due time and without mishap the train arrived at its New York destination, and John had his baggage transferred across that city to the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railway station, where he entrained again for the second stage of his journey, and finally set foot upon the “sacred” collegiate soil of old New Haven, The Mecca of so many aspiring, beardless youths before him.

He gazed about him with a hesitant but lively expectancy, having made friends with no other prospective or already-matriculated Yale men on the train, although there were a number of fellows on board who looked the part. But he could discover nothing particularly suggestive of the college life or spirit until after he had registered at the New Haven House, which, being the leading hotel at that time, was crowded to the roof with students and their parents, “their sisters, their cousins and their aunts.”

When he had secured a place there to sleep

for the night and had dined, he sauntered out alone, up past the old Campus, with its enormous, ancient elms and its rail fence enclosing, together with more modern buildings, the Chapel, Old South Middle and other dilapidated dormitories and rookeries that dated back almost beyond the ken of man.

It was evening; the moon shone down in dreamy splendor on the dew-starred grass, the worn brick walks, the rustling, glinting leaves and the quaint old New England architecture of the town.

The top rails of the old, time-honored fence were black with squatting figures, some, pipe-in-mouth, wafting up the incense of slow-curling wreaths of aromatic smoke which faded like gossamery cobwebs into the still, pale air, and *all* with both hands in their pockets.

As he stood wavering and enchanted at the corner of classic Elm and Church streets, drinking in with quivering nostrils and dilating eyes the soul-inspiring spirit of the college scene, there rose upon the crisp, clear autumn evening air, apparently without premeditation, yet simultaneously from every throat upon the entire top line of the fence, the peacefully opening bars of that never-to-be-forgotten Yale song, "I-EEL." As each succeeding stanza of the venerable song was reached, it was taken up by

the particular class to which it referred, and the song was continued with increasing speed and gusto, all the classes joining in vociferously on the chorus.

At the beginning of the final stanzas the light, joyous air was suddenly changed to a slow, deep and measured dirge; and the rich, mellow voices of the seniors, who lead it, lingered over each word and note with such strange touch of infinite sorrow and last adieus, that an irresistible thrill tingled along John's nerves and spinal column and brought his heart to his throat, and wrapped the moon for him in an irised mist of tears. As the last note of the faltering, funereal chorus died away in soul-stricken grief, the whole crowd abruptly began the chorus all over again, and rattled through it in quick, staccato shouts, fortissimo, and with ever-accelerated time, till its last note ended in a short-drawn howl, to be followed by that modernized, nerve-tearing, ear-splitting, Indian warwhoop, the Yale yell.

I-EEL.*

As Freshmen, first we come to Yale;
Fol de rol de rol rol rol,
Examinations make us pale,
Fol de rol de rol rol rol.

CHORUS:

Presto Eel-i-eel-i-eel-i-Yale,
Fol de rol de rol rol rol,
Eel-i-eel-i-eel-i-Yale,
Fol de rol de rol rol rol.

ERIC MAROTTÉ

As Sophomores we have our task;
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol,
 'Tis best performed with torch and mask,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol.—*Chorus*.

In Junior year we take our ease,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol,
 We smoke our pipes and sing our glees,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol.—*Chorus*.

In Senior year we act our parts,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol,
 In making love, and winning hearts,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol.—*Chorus*.

And then into the world we come;
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol,
 We've made good friends and studied—some,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol.—*Chorus*.

Adagio The saddest tale we have to tell,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol,
 Is when we bid our friends farewell,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol.—*Chorus*.

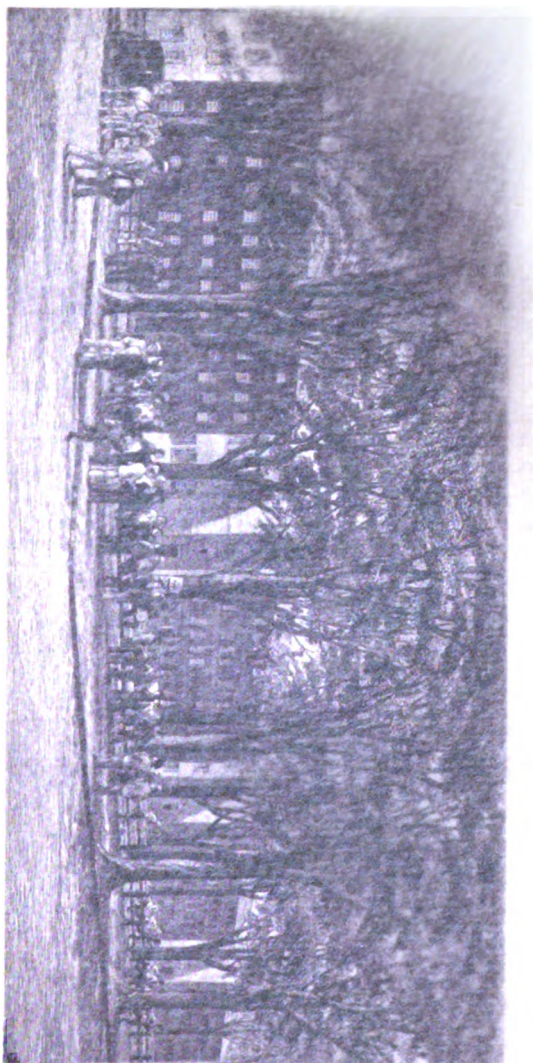
A tempo And till the sun and moon shall pale,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol,
 We'll love and reverence Mother Yale,
 Fol de rol de rol rol rol.—*Chorus*.

Chorus repeated, accelerando and fortissimo.

*EEL-I-Yale: in honor of Elihu, or "Eli" Yale, the patron of Yale College.

The effect produced on the listener by this "glee" is more easily felt than described; and on John's tender, lonely heart its cadences fell like a balm, filling it to overflowing with soaring hope and ambition and hearty *camaraderie*.

At the time John entered the university life of Yale there were far fewer dormitories, living halls and apartments provided for the accommodation of her students than at present, and



"NEATH THE ELMS OF DEAR OLD YALE"

most of the freshmen were compelled to rustle around for individual rooms and eating places among the close-by boarding houses and the many old dwellings of moderate pretensions in which more or less senile landladies and financially embarrassed local families furnished unsophisticated college youths with some of the comforts, but none of the luxuries, of a home.

Some practical joker in a group of sophomores to whom John innocently applied for information on the subject the following morning, maliciously directed him to one of the worst-conducted and most dilapidated of New Haven's notoriously rotten students' boarding houses.

The same deplorable condition of affairs in this respect confronts the Yale freshmen to-day, there being scarcely a decent, modern rooming-house or apartment building, aside from those attached to the university itself, for blocks around the Campus and main buildings of the school. The old worm-eaten shacks that look as if they were erected when the first elms were planted about the Campus, have proved too profitable to their get-rich-quick owners and tenants to be removed or improved; and New Haven being peculiarly a city content to live upon the necessities of the "stoodints," as it has done for some hundreds of years, with all the crustiness and cupidity of age,—its only

prey the fresh young "outlanders" who fall temporarily within its clutches, it has become chronically case-hardened, and, like the fly that lit on the grocery-man's ham, "it doesn't give a damn."

John interviewed the unkempt Goddess of Plenty who presided over the corporeal well-being of the embryonic statesmen and chrysalis captains of industry at the address on Church street given him by the smug wag; and, though the outside appearance of the place was uninviting enough and its presiding genius still less so, he "fell for" her assertion that all the students just doted on getting into as old and historic quarters as they could, even paying a premium for extra barrenness; and agreed with her on a weekly tariff.

That night he moved in his belongings and ate his first meal there. The meal was simply atrocious, the dining-room and kitchen an improvised shambles and his bedroom—Demosthenes, with all his eloquence, could not have done it descriptive justice! Nor could he have found words to portray the luridity of the impression it made upon the sensitive boy, fresh from home and mother's cleanly ways.

A pewter bowl and ewer, gracing jauntily a rickety washstand with two lean arms that seemed perpetually raised in self-defence

against expected blows; a cracked but highly decorated slop-jar with a hand-worked, striped worsted "tidy" sporting a tassel in the centre, drawn carefully over its cover; a Boston rocker with both heels broken off at the front legs and streaked with ink and half bare of paint; a bedstead like a horse-stall, filled with a husk mattress well lumped to fit the shape of the room's last incumbent; torn linen the color of a gray cloud; one pillow redolent of the hen-yard; a three-legged table (by grace of the imagination a tripod); a German-plate mirror (called a looking glass) with more angles of refraction than one dim gas jet could handle at one time; a bureau sans mirror, sans nobis, sans varnish, sans cleanliness, sans everything: and, to surmount all, a floor "covering" of faded oil-cloth, devoid of its original design except under the bureau. This latter "*objet de vertu*" was itself covered in turn, in ostensible carelessly-artistic arrangements, by narrow strips of threadbare, borderless carpet of various vintages. On curious after-investigation, he found these ungeometrically-distributed "rugs" to have been placed over an equal number of holes in the underlying oil-cloth, to add to the *tout ensemble* of this egregious hole-in-the-wall which the affable landlady designated as "his little boudoir."

The walls had been possible masterpieces of

rural mural magnificence in their time, but the "flight of the ages" had sobered them into one prevalent hue of dismalness. The ceiling gaped in irregular cracks from which the boarding-house "menagerie" made occasional sortees and reconnaissances to view the new tenant and allow their pampered proboscises to "water" over their approaching feast; for in this "home" the bugs, at least, fared well. One could almost imagine that, with the aid of one of the powerful sound-multipliers of the college's physical laboratory, he could hear them declaiming that ferocious quatrain:

"Fee, fie, fo, fum!
I smell the blood of an Englishmun;
Dead or alive, I will have some!
Fee, fie, fo, fum!"

Afraid to trust to either the purity or the stability of his "royal couch," John dallied long and gingerly over his disrobing, taking a towel, wet on one end (fortunately there were two of them in sight, as the season was yet young) to the bedside with him, with which to cleanse the "souls" of his feet after crossing the room. Then he held his breath and took the dreadful plunge into that "Rocky Road to Dublin." With the light out and the late moon peering in translucently through the single dirty, small-paned, diminutive window of the room, the aspect of his surroundings lost a part of its horrors for

him, and throwing off by a mighty mental effort the fit of "the blues" it gave him, he commended his soul to God and his landlady-witch to the devil and *slept*, "though angels wept." (O youth and hope! from what despond doth Morpheus preserve you!)

Morning dawned on all the hideousness of John's curiosity-shop of a bedroom; and getting up stiffly, rubbing the sore spots on his anatomy where he had "bumped the bumps" on his "impressing" mattress, he dressed and descended to the regular New Haven "stoodints" boarding-house breakfast.

Here he met with another jolting surprise—Eggs à la Home for the Aged Poor; Coffee à la Big Muddy River; Butter en Greece; two one-by-three-by-a-half-inch strips of Beefsteak de Horse; Potatoes, Naturally-Bad; Syrup alias Molasses; Oatmeal à la Oliver Twist; Milk à la Town Pump; Corn-bread au Pellegra—Shades of Epicurus! on what luxurious pabulum doth the "business-woman" feed other women's sons!

John shut his eyes and bolted his portion of the matutinal banquet; and, having foolishly paid his board for a week in advance, felt constrained to put up with all this bodily insult till the expiration of that period.

But that night he walked the silent streets

envying the dwellers in each house he passed in whose windows a cheerful, home-like light was burning, and felt that every one had a home and love and decency, except himself. Over him came the terror-inspiring consciousness that he was now an Ishmael—a pariah, that he was not as other men.

He walked for hours, but could not shake off the overpowering melancholy of his thoughts and feelings; then sought again his nightmare of a room, and falling on his knees by the bed, gave himself up to all the agony and longing and silent supplications of violent nostalgia, that affection of the mind and heart which, like love, seems so humorously imaginary in others and so excruciatingly real in ourselves.

In the language of Henryk Sienkiewicz, "In moments like these the soul gets wings; what it has to remember it remembers; what it loves it loves still more warmly; what it longs for, there it flies."

Sick at heart, he haunted for days the university's reading rooms, devouring every line of the current Chicago papers in his desperate clinging to their home ties.


One day before his week was up at that "Hotel Horrific," he moved to better quarters further out, on York street; and in time his home-sickness disappeared and was lost in the

multiplicity of his new university and class interests. He joined the "Alpha Chi" society, participated in the "cane-rush" and other boisterous exuberances of collegiate life, including getting properly hazed and stealing a good-sized sign-board with which to decorate his "den," and gradually became part and parcel of the college spirit, with its athletic, scholastic, social and political evolutions and emulations, its joys and sorrows, its triumphs and disappointments. He was a full-fledged collegian at last.

Four years he laboriously climbed the tree of universal learning, high and wide as the immemorial elms upon the Campus, that trace the long generations of that ancient seat of erudition in the rings of their mighty trunks; till eventually came that great day and week, the Last Commencement for him—the end of the school, but the beginning of the life of the world; the great transition from theory to practice, when the much-lauded graduate with his talismanic sheep-skin hugged fondly and proudly to his manly bosom, goeth forth, a tiny, tinkling deity astride a hobby on rollers; one hand raised loftily before him and stabbing the empyrean with the sword of progress, insurgency, enlightenment and glory; the other hand dragging behind him by the tail the poor, old, benighted world, all upside down and kicking.

CHAPTER XIII.

ENTRÉ NOUS

T was six o'clock, P. M., on the fourteenth day of June, 189—. The manager of the Windsor Hotel in Montreal, Canada, had just descended in the "lift" from his luxurious private apartments, and was strutting across the hotel lobby in his full-dress suit, his expansive shirt front emblazoned with three very large solitaire diamond studs—watching out of the corners of his eyes for those who might be duly impressed by his grandiose appearance.

As he paraded along he sized up in his *mind's* eye, the women among his guests who might prove susceptible to his charms and the men whom he could likely flatter into a profitable (to the house) vanity of expenditure. He was the head peacock of this "Peacock's Alley" of Canada, catering to and pampering the Canadian and American *bon ton*.

The spacious rotunda was filled with resident guests in semi-full dress, interspersed with new arrivals and late departures.

Over in one corner, partly concealed behind a real palm shrub of generous height, sat a

lady and gentleman of quiet mien and appareled in good taste. The man was of medium stature but rugged and wiry-looking, with the tan of the wild on face and hands. The woman was taller and a pronounced blonde, with clear skin and a Scandinavian cast of features. She was exceedingly attractive and intelligent in appearance. Evidently husband and wife, they were conversing together in low tones, oblivious of the passing sensation caused by the theatrical, pouter-pigeon entrée of the self-centered hotel manager. The man spoke with a decided French-Canadian accent, but the woman's English was beyond criticism. A rather oddly assorted pair, to look at them casually, they yet seemed perfectly congenial in their relations to each other, as though time and long endurance together had wrought between them a loving understanding.

"Well, then, it is settled," spoke the man; "and now let us go in to dinner."

"But, remember—afterwards"; and the woman rose from her seat in reply.

They passed on into the "*Salle à Manger*," as it was ground in great letters in the glass fan-light over the dining-room's double door. The *mâitre d' hotel* conducted them, with many flourishes of his hands and obsequious salaams, to the special two-chair table always reserved

for them, and left them to the tender mercies of the liveried side-waiter, whose solicitous deference proclaimed his respect for them as good "tippers."

The great room rapidly filled as they ate leisurely from course to course, languidly observing each new-comer; while the band played on and the cut flowers in the tall vases on the dining tables lent their fragrance to the brilliant scene.

Suddenly the woman motioned slightly and to the right, calling her companion's attention to a party of two, probably mother and daughter, who had just been seated across the floor from them. The man turned slowly, and inoffensively took them in.

"What hair! What a face!" he exclaimed softly; "Americans, I fancy."

"We must know them!" replied the woman. "They seem to be unattended and unknown here. There is something about that young girl that affects me clairvoyantly—as though the lines of our lives have crossed before and will cross again with some tremendous consequence to us both. My heart beats so at sight of her, it frightens me! It's not alone her beauty that fascinates me—it's something else that I do not understand."

"I too am unaccountably impressed. Let's

leave the dining room before them and ask at the office who they are."

Fifteen minutes later they were in possession of all the information at the clerk's disposal, viz: Mrs. and Miss Gretchen Hummelmueller, registered from Chicago, Illinois; rooms engaged ahead by wire for a two-days' stop over on their way to Quebec.

Seating themselves where they commanded an unobstructed view of the entire rotunda, the couple watched and waited for the reappearance of the two Americans when they should have finished dinner.

Presently the latter came out, and after visiting the various curio stands and little shops of the hotel adjoining the lobby and taking several turns about the spacious place, settled down on a settee not far from the Canadians, to enjoy the life and novelty of the situation at their ease. They were shortly espied by the grandiloquent manager, who approached and asked after their convenience and comfort. He gradually engaged them in the recounting of their experiences on their trip there from Chicago, via the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River, with its Thousand Islands, and the "shooting" of the Lachine Rapids by their steamer; expatiating in his turn upon the further beauties of that majestic river as it flowed

northward, past quaint old Quebec, with its upper and lower towns and ancient fortress, to its broad, ice-bound mouth. He begged them particularly not to omit the wonderful side-trip up the Saguenay River, that tributary whose sublime and awe-inspiring cliffs rival in magnificence, solemnity and wild grandeur the Falls of Niagara.

Then speaking of the Canadian Northwest, with its boundless forests and fertile rolling plains, its picturesque mountain scenery and undeveloped riches, his wandering eye fell upon the French-Canadian and his wife, and he said:

“Ladies, let me introduce to you one of our most successful frontiers-lumber-men, who has just retired to Montreal with a large fortune honestly won from that erstwhile inhospitable wilderness. I assure you, you will enjoy his graphic account of the trials, hardships and adventures he and his noble wife went through there. And his descriptions, at first hand, of these then almost unknown regions will please you more than those in any book you ever read. They are now the social “lions” of Montreal and you should meet them, by all means—Permit me.”

And on their acquiescence, he called a “bell-hop” and ordered him to fetch two chairs. Going up to the other couple, he invited them to

meet the Chicago ladies, "in whom he felt sure," he said, "they would become highly interested."

The Canadians had been furtively observing the little group all this time, and arose with alacrity to accompany him to them.

"Mrs. and Miss Hummelmüller, this is Mr. and Mrs. Marotté. I have explained to them that you are traveling alone and are strangers here; and they, I am persuaded, will have great pleasure in telling you everything of real interest about our city and province and of their long sojourn in Middle and Western Canada.—If you will excuse me now, I have not yet dined." And with his most imposing bow he left them to improve their mutual acquaintance.

"Mrs. Hummelmüller," began Mrs. Marotté, "I am glad indeed to know you, and I will do my best to make your stay with us an interesting and enjoyable one. To tell you the truth, both my husband and myself have already been greatly attracted by your beautiful daughter, and had hoped for an introduction to you before you left Montreal."

Mrs. Hummelmüller's face beamed, while Gretchen blushed a little consciously at the broad personal compliment to herself.

But she managed to say, politely:

"You are very kind, madam; and you may

be sure we shall appreciate your courtesies, and perhaps we may some time be permitted to return them. Mamma and I were just wondering how to get about in the morning and what to do first; but now with you and Mr. Marotté for "friends, philosophers and guides," we shall fare far better than we could have expected. If you will direct us how to go about our sight-seeing, we will try not to impose upon your time and good-nature too much."

"The pleasure will be ours," returned Mrs. Marotté. "You see, you two are *persona grata* with us."

Mr. Marotté and Gretchen's mother now joining in the general conversation, an hour sped by unheeded; till Mrs. Marotté, happening to glance at the big office-clock, gave a quick exclamation of surprise. Addressing her husband, she cried out half-anxiously:

"Good gracious! I have been so wrapped up in our talk that I entirely forgot the day! Francois, what shall we do? I don't like to leave the ladies so abruptly, but you know how much this night means to us both."

Her husband started to reply. She held up her hand with a quick, deterring gesture.

"Wait a minute! I have an inspiration! Why not invite the ladies to join us in our private parlor? I know we have always before held

this occasion sacred to ourselves, and that no other soul has ever witnessed our vigils; but I feel—I know—that Fate has brought Miss Gretchen here to-night for some sure purpose of its own, and I am sorely tempted to break our old rule, if she and her mother will grant us their presence and sympathies for the nonce.” Mr. Marotté nodded quietly.

Turning to the others, she explained that she and her husband had planned to hold an “anniversary” in their rooms that evening, and added that, “if not too fatigued with their long journey, she begged them to accompany them there now.” “She would not detain them long,” she said, “and would acquaint them with one of the strangest tales of real life they had ever heard.”

Curious and sympathetic, they responded willingly to her urgent entreaties, and the whole party walked at once to the “lift.”

Entering their own parlor, Mrs. Marotté turned on the lights, and disclosed a table set in the centre of the room and laid with a white cloth, upon which rested a round “birth-day-cake,” surmounted all around its outside edge by twenty inserted, tiny, pure-white wax candles.

Drawing up four chairs to the four sides of the small table and requesting their visitors to

be seated on either side of herself, she and her husband sat down facing each other; and a short silence ensued.

The suspense was ended, after a little, by Mr. Marotté, who lowered his eyes, and in a subdued voice asked a benediction in these strange words:

“O Father of the fatherless, whose all-seeing eyes can scan this earth from pole to pole, whose wide omniscient ear can hear the cries and prayers of each dumb brute and every mortal in distress, whose mercy mild encompasses e’en when we go astray; we thank Thee fervently for all the blessings with which it long hath pleased Thy overheart to so endow us. We do adore Thee, and do not now complain, but if thou wilt but hear our humble supplications, watch Thou o’er our little son where’er he wanders, and let us see him once again before we die. Or, if Thou hast already called him to Thy side, so guide our footsteps that in death they lead to him. Amen.”

He raised his bowed head, and his wife, with strained lips and suffering eyes, arose and lighted all the little candles one by one.

Mrs. Hummelmueller and Gretchen were so overcome by surprise at the unusual proceedings that they could only sit silent, staring

first at Mr. Marotté and then at his wife, in pitying wonder.

The latter sat musing and speechless before them, forgetful of their presence, gazing with far-away looks into some hidden past whose memories obsessed them.

Mrs. Marotté was the first to recover from their abstraction, and with a wan, apologetic smile recalled herself to the amenities as hostess.

“You must bear with us a moment, my dears, and I will elucidate to you the seeming strangeness of this orison—this ‘breaking of bread’ with the unseen. There is nothing fanatical or mystical about it when you come to understand its meaning and the circumstances which originated it.”

Taking up a silver knife which lay beside a pile of three decorated plates and securing two more plates from a miniature sideboard, she cut a slice from the cake for each of those present and another one for the spirit of their absent son.

She moved a fifth chair to the table beside her, and set this plate with its portion on the table in front of it. In cutting the cake she extinguished five of the little candles, but left all of the rest burning. Before she sat down again in her own place at the table she turned

out all the electric lamps in the parlor, throwing open the connecting door to their bedroom, from whence a subdued glow bathed in an eerie semi-gloom the room in which they sat. The light from the candles on the table threw the faces of those seated around it into a weird, Rembrandt-like relief in chiaroscuro, like the flames of a camp-fire in the woods on a dark night. The visitors shivered and glanced fearfully about the room.

Mrs. Marotté began again, without preamble:

“Twenty years ago to-night a son was born to us near one of the then far outposts of the Canadian frontier, in a log cabin of two rooms, flanked by the shacks and bunk houses of a wilderness logging camp in Northeastern Manitoba.

“We were comparatively poor then, but Francois, my husband, owned a half interest in the timber we were cutting and personally ‘bossed’ the logging crew.

“I had refused to be separated from him during the logging season; and as we could induce no woman servant to follow us to so wild and lonely a spot, I had decided to do most of the primitive cooking and house-work for us two myself, with an occasion lift from the man who acted as our camp cook.

“The winter following the birth of our son



"THE LIGHT FROM THE CANDLES ON THE TABLE THREW THE FACES OF THOSE SEATED AROUND IT INTO A WEIRD, REMBRANDT-LIKE RELIEF IN CHIAROSCURO"

was a severe one, even for that part of Canada, with a continuous, heavy snow-fall which made all our men anxious to get out as many logs as possible and establish a new logging record.

“It was now early spring, and preparations for the log-drive down the river and lakes were nearly completed.

“Our child was at this time nearly nine months old and seemed none the worse for lacking the conveniences and advantages of civilized communities; for he was as sturdy and happy as a baby can be and the delight of the whole camp, to most of whose members he was a never-ending source of surprise and curiosity and an object of rough adoration.

“He slept in a crude cradle the camp carpenter had made and presented to him with bursting pride, and was allowed to crawl about the floor of the combined kitchen and living room of the cabin during his waking hours, when I was busy. The big, open fireplace had been fenced off with sapling branches to prevent his approaching it too closely. There was no door between the two rooms, but a portier improvised out of a large blanket and rigged on a round tree-limb, answered its purpose. I always fastened this back against the door-jamb in the day time, so that the child was never out of my sight. This precaution was taken

partly on account of the wild animals which occasionally visited the camp when hungry—even in daylight, when the men were away in the timber.

“Late one afternoon, on a day so unusually mild that the snow began to thaw, I left the front door of the cabin open to let in the bright rays of the declining sun. About five o’clock I found I was out of water, and seeing nothing around to disturb the child, I took the two empty buckets and started for the river, which was only a few rods away but on the opposite side of the cabin from its one outer doorway. I was interested in following the first signs of the coming spring and speculating on the approaching log-drive, and did not hurry; but I could not have been outside the cabin over ten minutes when I thought I heard the baby’s frightened cry.

“Dropping the buckets, I ran back quickly. Just as I rounded the corner of the cabin, I saw a great she-bear half running, half walking, towards the edge of the clearing, about five hundred feet to the west; and I nearly swooned with fright and horror when I saw *our baby* clutched between one fore paw of the bear and its muzzle.

“That sight was indelibly burnt upon the retinas of my eyes. It still haunts my dreams

of nights, so that I often wake up in terror, shivering in a cold perspiration like a murderer confronted by the ghost of his victim.

“The bear espied me at the same instant I did her, and dropping to all fours with the babe’s clothing held between her teeth, dashed off at top speed.

“I stumbled into the cabin half dazed, and seizing the extra rifle which always hung on the pegs over the low door, ran screaming after it.

“I did not dare to fire at the bear, however, lest I might kill the child or only wound the bear, which would then likely destroy the child in her rage. But I fired two shots into the air, and their reports and my screams must have reached the “lumber jacks” working nearest by in the woods; for I found several of them standing over me, and trying to resuscitate me, and all imploring me to tell them what had happened, when I recovered from my fit of fainting on the spot, a quarter of a mile from the cabin, where I had fallen over a hidden log.

“Just as I opened my lips to give them the awful tidings, my husband came running up. He had gone first to the cabin, and finding our baby gone and the big bear’s tracks leading to and away from it, had at once surmised the terrible misfortune that had befallen us.

"He lifted me up and set me against the trunk of a tree and with quick words and gestures told the men the horrible truth. Then he and two others who were armed broke through the tangled underbrush, following the bear's trail, while the rest of the men present rushed back to the forest to spread the alarm and to the camp to gather arms for the rest of the crew.

"I had badly sprained an ankle in my fall over the log, but got unsteadily to my feet and attempted to limp after my husband's small party, in spite of the excruciating pains that shot through my injured limb at every step; until a couple of our men overtook me and insisted on carrying me home to the cabin, where they left the camp cook to care for and reassure me, and to guard me by force from crawling after the bear hunters on my hands and knees, which he afterwards declared I repeatedly tried to do.

"This man, who was one of our oldest and most trusted hands, finally persuaded me that I could do nothing to help find and recover our lost child, and set to work bathing my swollen ankle in hot water and then wrapping it in a hot, wet sheet with a blanket over that.

"Hours went by filled with such mental and physical agony together as I hope you may never have to endure. I could only rage and

moan and weep by turns. Midnight came, and still the men had not returned.

“At dawn they began to straggle in from various directions. It was unnecessary to ask them any questions—their sombre faces told the story of their failure to find any traces of either the baby or the bear. At three o’clock in the morning the last of the men got in, excepting my husband (Francois here), and the two men who had started out with him at the first. These had stayed in the timber to continue the desperate search.

“In the meantime the cook had turned me over to another ‘nurse’ and prepared an early breakfast for the crew. After eating it and taking two hours’ sleep, they let the logging go for the day and went out again, carrying along with them food for the three men who still kept up the hunt.

“Francois did not come back to the cabin at all until they all arrived together the following night. Neither the bear or the baby had been discovered, nor had any shred of the baby’s clothing been found. It seemed unaccountable, but the bear’s tracks had mysteriously stopped at the edge of a deep ravine, and although the men beat over every foot of the natural depression and followed its course to both its outlets, and searched the banks all

around it a hundred times, they could pick up no trail of the bear's paws indicating that it had either entered or left that ravine.

"That night was a more terrible one to me than the preceding night; for now I had partly lost the agonizing sense of suspense, but gained a more horrible fear of certainty. I pictured to myself the horrible, revolting spectacle of my child being leisurely devoured by the bear. I saw the brute tear it part from part. I heard her crunch its little bones. I heard its dying cries—I raved! I thought I should go insane, and it was imperative to watch and restrain and soothe me during every hour.

"By the second morning it was snowing heavily, in spite of the lateness of the season; and the bear's tracks, and even those made by our men the day before, had become entirely obliterated. Nevertheless my husband again headed a searching-party, which spent another whole day in fruitless attempts to locate the bear's lair. And if the bear had been in hiding anywhere near, she had evidently had the natural instinct to make her escape during the first fall of the heavy snow in the middle of the night, so as to leave no trail behind her.

"The apparently miraculous disappearance into nothingness, or thin air, of the bear and our child, has never been explained to this day,

and, though the alarm was spread for miles around the camp, no one ever reported their reappearance in any direction.

"We held back the 'drive' to the last possible minute, but at last packed our household goods and camp equipments and poled the logs down the river, in a blank and superstitious despair.

"Our reason tells us that our boy is dead; yet, even in this hour, I cannot disabuse my mind of the prescient faith that he still lives, and that in God's own good time we shall find him again. My heart, like a sixth sense, is ever alert for some message from the visible or the invisible world which shall disclose to us the hidden clew we still seek.

"It was this 'sixth sense' that so suddenly drew my attention and so strongly attracted me to Miss Gretchen, and led me to invite you ladies to participate in this anniversary of ours, which is both commemoration of our dead and a spiritual reunion with our living. I am *positive* in my heart, that Gretchen is in *some* way connected with that elusive clew for which we have never given up our search, and I beg, here on my knees, that she help us if she can!"

Mrs. Marotté ceased speaking, her voice hoarse from emotion, and her breast heaving with an agitation that was reflected in her hus-

band's pleading face. They both gazed expectantly at Mrs. Hummelmueller and Gretchen. The latter had listened, as had her mother, in breathless silence and awe to the astonishing story and its weird mental association with herself by their hosts; and for the space of several minutes neither spoke.

Comment seemed cruel and superfluous—the mystery and the wound were too deep for tactless probing; and they were too deeply and sincerely affected by the story to offer their hosts either unsought advice or compassionate platitudes and banalities.

A spell seemed to have been cast over the young girl that she could not break. Turning her eyes slowly upon Mrs. Marotté with a half-hypnotized expression on her face, she said:

“You have almost convinced me that there is such a thing as the sixth sense and that it is now coming to *me* and will eventually lead me to the same goal your own heart sees ahead. I shall never cease now to watch for the signs, however slight, of the spiritual, guiding hand which men call woman's intuition, in eager hope that it will, soon or late, point out to me the way to help you. And, too, I feel subconsciously that my own future is inextricably and peculiarly involved in yours.”

Mrs. Marotté arose with a relieved sigh and

kissed Gretchen's forehead with the holy, consecrating kiss of perfect trust and a mother's blessing, then moved her chair close and sat down with one arm around her.

Their talk drifted into ordinary channels again, until the party separated for the evening. That night and many a night thereafter Gretchen dreamed strange dreams, creations of subconsciousness and spirituality, broken and intermittent and obscure, yet ever returning to the same one kaleidoscopic scene—breaking again into a thousand new ones before the sleeping brain-cells could fix or record its meaning. In the morning she could never recall clearly and coherently any part of these visions, but she considered it a good omen that she always awoke from them happy and hopeful.

After two days of sight-seeing and shopping under the chaperonage of their new-found friends, she and her mother bid them "*Auf wiedersehen*," and proceeded on their way towards Quebec. Before they left, however, Mr. and Mrs. Marotté promised to look them up in Chicago the next time they visited "The States," where business matters frequently called them, and to correspond with them in the meantime.

CHAPTER XIV.

HOME AGAIN—ALSO A COLLOQUIAL DISSERTATION ON THE RACE PROBLEM

WHEN John, after his last university semester, returned to Chicago with his baccalaureate degree, Mrs. Hummelmueller and Gretchen were still absent on their travels, and for a week or so Young-Love could not go a-wooing. His reception by his many old friends and admirers was cordial if not hilarious; and his foster-parents were, of course, openly proud of him, and secretly adored him as a coming genius marked by both Fame and Fortune for their own—as the fond parents of even the most mediocre college graduates are generously apt to be and do, God bless 'em! There was nothing too good for him at home, and they listened to his youthfully ambitious plans and ideas and his dissertations on college life and studies with that respectful, self-gratulatory awe which the uneducated invariably feel in the presence of those for whom they have been enabled, by either good fortune or personal sacrifice, to provide the opportunities for higher education that they themselves have been denied, and the lack

of which in their own cases they have long secretly regretted with that over-estimation of the power of mere learning common to those who have succeeded in life without it, and who, with the coming of financial and social elevation, begin to feel the need of its polish and convenience the more keenly. Higher education may be a failure sometimes (as the late educationally iconoclastic iron-master, Mr. Crane, so strenuously maintained), but there is a wondrous lot of satisfaction in its possession, even vicariously.

It was decided by John's family that nothing should be done about choosing a "career" for their budding genius until the return home of the Hummelmuellers *merè* and *fillè*. The principal of the ten thousand dollars reward that Mr. Hummelmueller had insisted upon settling upon John for his wonderful, heroic rescue of Gretchen from the lumber yard fire, had not been touched, as the income from its profitable investment had been sufficient, with what his foster-father could spare him, to carry him through his four years at the university, and was still intact, and immediately available. When all the members of both families were finally assembled together in solemn confabulation over the important question of John's proper vocational choice, they took up the mat-

ter in all its phases and threshed out the pros and cons of whether it would be better to use it in purchasing for John an interest in some congenial business at once or to leave it where it was for the present and find him a position with a large concern where he could rise by his own merits. John's own inclination was to combine the two ideas by entering some good line of business as an employee, with the privilege of acquiring a partnership, or stock, in the concern later on if mutually agreeable to himself and his employers. This plan appealed to them all as a sound one, especially considering his youth and inexperience, and it was agreed that they (the men-folks) should look around for a suitable opening for him.

This required several months of careful inquiries and lengthy conferences, and it was late fall before just the right combination was found and John started to work. (Mr. Hummelmuel-ler would gladly have made a place for him in his brewery, but John, who did not drink himself, had youthful scruples against selling drink to others and felt, that even if he accepted the chance, his heart would not be in his work and, moreover, he was not adapted, either by birth or bringing up, to the business.) The firm finally chosen was a comparatively new one engaged in the manufacturing of machinery

of a special kind, and which needed additional capital to develop several promising side lines in contemplation. John had a natural bent in that direction and felt that he could bring to his labors here that greater likelihood of success which accrues from a genuine liking for both the theory and practice of the thing one daily strives to master. An absorbing interest in any certain business or profession is not only the "hall mark" of success in all its probabilities, but the key to contentment; and he was fortunate in not only being able to choose from the beginning a permanent and agreeable line of work, but in discovering that he had not unduly overestimated his own adaptability to that line. For, while it is a wise axiom for a youth starting out in the world to "go where the door is open" to him, it is better, wherever possible, to fit the job to the man rather than the man to the job.

John went into harness with that eager-eyed, curious, intelligent freshness so fascinating to observe in the ambitious young upon their first, enthusiastic engagement in the practical, systematized work of the real world of business—before they "become too wise for happiness" in routine endeavor. He was started in overalls at the bottom of the ladder, but, of course, remained on each successive rungle—in each suc-

cessive position—only long enough to learn practically and personally how to perform its respective labors, and to grasp intelligently the relation of the thread of its duties to the whole fabric of the business. Within two years, he had mastered the entire details and system of the machine shop, and of its sales department as well, and was made secretary and treasurer of the stock company into which the firm was merged and organized upon the investment with it of John's ten thousand dollar "nest-egg"; and the new concern branched out at once in several new special lines, their business growing healthfully with the rapidly developing city and its tributary fields of expanding trade.

By this course John secured the double advantage of not only knowing the work of each employee's position so well that none could fool or impose upon him and he could use his own invention and initiative to simplify or increase the efficiency of individual jobs, and could break in new men or take temporarily the place of a quitter—BUT of being absolutely sure of the stability and progressiveness of the firm itself, the personal peculiarities of its members, and the true state of its plant and financial condition, together with the profits reasonably to be expected upon his investment, over and beyond

his stipulated salary as a working officer of the corporation.

During these two years of his apprenticeship, unassailed by any pressing financial anxieties, John and Gretchen made the most of his hours of leisure in mutual seeking for intellectual improvement; nor did they neglect to participate in the entertainments and social pleasures of their old associates and new acquaintances and to entertain them in their turn. But best of all to them were those salubrious evenings they spent in walking together and communing with nature under the steadfast stars and fickle moon, and their occasional Sunday excursions to near-by points of interest outside the city. They were still young, wisely happy in the present and attached to their homes by tender ties; and while their propinquity was very close and magnetic, it seemed tacitly understood between them that no change in their lives would or could be broached or considered until John should be definitely settled in a permanent, lucrative business position.

They were not engaged; yet insensibly they acted as if they were, and their lover-like constancy and delight in each other's society gave that impression to all around them. In their daily intercourse, howbeit, Gretchen was more of the actual love-maker than John himself,

who, however much his heart longed for the spiritual and physical sole possession of her, was continually subject to the deterrent, agonizing realization that he was, in all probability, a Negro—or at least had Negro blood in his veins. Like a terrible nightmare hanging over him in broad daylight, was the persistent thought that all the beauty, sweetness, love and allurements personified in Gretchen must be denied himself, and by his own will, solely because of this unanswered question of his birth. The only relieving brightness of hope that lit his future skies was the very *uncertainty* of the identity and color of skin of his real parents; and that was largely dimmed by the effects of his rearing by and long living with his Negro foster-parents, whom he really loved, and whom he so respected and held in such grateful veneration that it never entered his head to be ashamed of or deny them. The Mannings knew this and it endeared him all the more tenderly to them.

Craving Gretchen with all his heart and soul and body, as he did, he yet could not bring himself to sully her with his own ineradicable social flaw through their marriage and its inevitable results. Suppose they came to have children born to them—would they be black or white? It was as though he were a leper, hold-

ing her off while madly longing for her; crying out to her that he was "unclean! unclean!" Gretchen, when she spoke of this impediment at all, always protested loyally her utter indifference to the objection which he still regarded as insurmountable with honor towards her, and begged him to disregard it, and to forget it in the greater felicity such disregard and forgetfulness would bring about for both of them—saying, too, that she could not believe in her own heart that he was really a Negro, and that they could afford to leave the solution of his birthright to some happy chance of the future. But he could not justify himself in accepting this gift of the gods so alluringly held out to him, though the alternative of an indefinite postponement of their marriage was fully as bitter as the thought of marrying her under the blight of his disqualifiedness for such a bliss. On either horn of the dilemma perfect happiness seemed denied him, and he was in a fair way of becoming hypochondriac over the paralyzing indecision that, waking or sleeping, haunted him. He worked on mechanically, hoping against despair that a way out would soon be disclosed to him by that higher Power to Whom the different pigments in human skins are but as the different colors of the flowers in the garden of His Love.

Another Christmas, that day which both families annually celebrated as the anniversary of his sudden, mystifying advent in the home of his foster-parents, was now drawing near; and, ever mingled with and tingeing the thoughts of the gaiety and loving charity and good-will the day always exemplified to him, was the melancholy touch of the baffling secret of his own birth and color, to which he had not the slightest clew.

To understand more clearly his position, let us suppose for a moment that we, all of us, knew not our own parents, but were dropped from the skies or sprung up out of the bosom of the earth fatherless and motherless and knowing no racial connections. What then?

The Negro is always to be pitied, and to be helped whenever he shows a disposition to help himself and his own race to rise above the present condition of practical servitude through which they must pass on their age-long journey from slavery to equality of opportunity—as other races have had to do before them; notably the Jews, that race of men *without a nation* to this day.

In North America no right-thinking Negro, and very few wrong-thinking ones, has any real belief or respect for miscegenation, but, rather, they regard with suspicion or open disre-

spect the white women who marry into their race. The number, especially of negresses, who actually intermarry with the whites is so small as to be negligible. So those who rant about the Negro's demands for miscegenation, are simply wasting their breath on a fancied evil. (In Brazil and other South American countries the case is different, especially in the Portuguese districts.)

But the *cloud is there!*—the black, eating despondency of their inequality with the Caucasian race; and the Negroes must be taught and assisted in the only right direction, that of a *racial* success by an interchange between themselves of trade relations, a building up of larger commercial enterprises by quasi-communal combinations of their individual capitals and by a social inter-development, mentally, educationally and morally, among their own kind, approaching gradually a higher standard.

In fine, instead of seeking to assimilate with the whites, they should be a clan to themselves, both socially and financially, like the Hebrews, who, to a large extent, consider all other races a common financial prey, with whom they have not, nor desire, either religious or close social relations, and inter-marriage with whom is against both their religious and social tenets. What the Jews have accomplished by clannish,

mutual helpfulness, trust-like trade preferences and a common front towards all "outsiders," the Negroes can also, in time and to a minor degree, succeed in doing; and with monetary success, added to sufficient numerical strength to form satisfactorily their own social circles (properly elevated), they will no longer need the commiseration of white Christians, any more than now do the Jews.

An example can be pointed out and seen more clearly in the more analogous cases of the different foreign "colonies," each a law unto itself, scattered through most of our larger, Northern American cities, and the similar herding together for mutual racial protection and pleasure in various sections of the North American farming regions by peoples of a common birth-place and language. These "colonies" and "communities" are rapidly reaping a financial success and improved standard of living due, particularly, to that clannishness which makes like buy of like and sell to those without the pale of their local, transported customs and dialects, modified and Americanized—i. e.: all other things being equal, they give social preference and their trade to their *own kind*, and combine within their own nationality or race to increase in number and enlarge their business places and political powers and benefits.

This is the real secret of any possible racial success. *This* the Negroes, partly through their foolish jealousy of each other's individual success, either have not firmly grasped, or lack the initiative or outside help and encouragement and capital to start on any plan of considerable magnitude. I am not overlooking the encouraging fact that there are, at least in Chicago, an increasing number of business and amusement enterprises—some conducted partly by white men and some wholly by the Negroes themselves—that cater almost exclusively to the colored trade; and it is noticeable that the larger and better and the more progressively managed these places are, the greater seems to be their patronage and financial success. In fact, it would pay the white people to put capital into this proposed enlarged commercial propaganda; but it is absolutely necessary for the Negroes, putting aside all mutual jealousies for the greater desideratum of mutual good, to save or borrow enough, collectively, to *own*, in time, all such establishments *themselves*, before they can become independent of the Caucasians, and sufficient unto themselves.

There are, too, many lines of business in which, with sufficient capital, experience and enterprise, they can combine to successfully sell to the white population on a large scale, and

thus insure equality of opportunity in those particular lines. The very capital and enterprise thus exhibited by them would create increased respect for them among the white races and result in a more ambitious standard of comparison on their own part that would bring its own content.

Individually, Negroes have already achieved prosperity of a kind and in cases few and far between, but to upraise them *as a race* requires concentrated and concerted action towards one concrete goal after another; and the Negro, or white man, who is instrumental in blazing wide for them the path to the accomplishment of this dream of co-ordinating co-operation, will be a second Emancipator of their race and a friend to all humanity.

Here, in the North, the Negro is measurably free to mingle with the whites—he rides on the same cars, attends the same schools and churches, buys of the same stores, eats in the same lunch rooms, drinks in the same saloons, visits the same theatres and art galleries, and, in the older, changing, residential parts of the city, lives on the same streets. Some of the higher-priced and more exclusive of these places are more or less barred to him, but they almost equally bar the white person of small means by not catering to him, nor making him welcome.

The Negro is highly imitative and, like the Jew, aspires to every advantage of the white Christian, and tries to encroach upon the homes and places of abode of the better class of the latter as nearly as possible, thinking, like the Jew, that they must be the more desirable, or most to be desired. But the Negro must *understand thoroughly* that historically he is many centuries behind the Jew in development, and as many centuries nearer to his old slavery than the Jew is to his ancient Egyptian bondage. And he must keep in mind, too, that Jews are the first prey of new ideas, with their alert intellect, their swift reception, their keen critical sense. Instead of "kicking against the pricks" of his greater social, commercial and labor limitations, he should do as the Jews have done through generation after generation (in spite of the ostracism and outrages perpetrated upon them in many countries, even now) viz.: pry his way slowly into each and every working trade and business and vocation and profession, one after another; not forgetting the Jewish formula of following closely in the footsteps of each leader who succeeds in breaking into a particular line of human endeavor and thus gradually augmenting their numbers in each line in which a foothold once is gained by them.

All this could be said in the passing of a

street car from home to working place or written within the space of a single ledger-page, but its actual full consummation is, perhaps, the work of life-times yet to come. But all evolutions have their striking crises, and, only recently, certain small foreign kingdoms sprang up republics over night. Japan has in less than a score of years become almost completely transmogrified in its national life and progress, and even Turkey and China have blossomed full blown into a higher freedom, setting aside in an hour the degenerating influences and customs, the corruption and abuses, of seemingly endless and impregnable powers inherited from the dark ages. Like fires that had smouldered for years, they burst suddenly and surely into the flames of either fiery or peaceful revolution.

So the Negro's amelioration of his own conditions, when once started along intelligent, far-seeing courses, may be brought to fruition more abruptly than we can conceive. Dr. Hollis Burke Prissel, doctor of human kindness, has, through his tireless and unadvertised efforts and aided wholly by Northern donors, sent out thousands of pupils to carry the Hampton Institute spirit of labor and service into the world.

Booker T. Washington has formulated and promulgated a noble and far-reaching conception in his Tuskegee Institute, a university for

Negroes, with its practical instruction in farming and trade lines and the professions, and its policy of sending out its graduates and teachers as leaders of smaller Negro schools; but the great mass of Negroes of the present generation should not and cannot wait in vain for such round-about help alone—especially in the North, where opportunities for radical advancement, particularly in the cities, can be made and utilized *now and at once*. Sporadic attempts have been made from time to time, to better the Negro's position, both by individuals and associations; and through the Negroes' National Business League considerable organized progress has already been made. With the financial assistance of several public-spirited millionaires of Chicago, notably Julius Rosenwald, Cyrus H. McCormick, N. W. Harris and Mrs. Gustavus F. Swift, ten thousand Negroes have just contributed and collected the funds needed for the erection of the first colored Y. M. C. A. building in that city, if not in the United States. The National Association of Colored Business Men (or National Negro Business League) has just held an important convention in the same city.

The following clippings from the Chicago Tribune of August twenty-second, twenty-third and twenty-fourth, 1912, reproduced here by permission, show conclusively the practicability

of the ideas herein emphasized and the ready, self-helpful response of the Negro to beneficent exploitation:

CITES NEGRO DUTY IN CHICAGO 'BELT'

**Booker T. Washington Holds Race Responsible
for All Its Vice and Crime**

TELLS OF OPPORTUNITIES

**Asserts Colored Merchants of the South Gain Trade
of White Residents There**

Booker T. Washington, speaking before the convention of the National Negro Business League at the Institutional Church, Dearborn near Thirty-eighth street, last night, urged on the members of Chicago's Negro colony their responsibility for keeping the "black belt" free from crime and vice.

"I have been surprised and delighted at the progress made by colored business men in Chicago. As I drove down State street the other day for a mile and a half I am sure that two-thirds of the places of business I saw were conducted by colored men.

"I was equally delighted to discover what handsome houses many of our people were living in. As I have had a chance to visit these houses I have been pleased to find how handsomely, even artistically, they were furnished and how carefully and neatly they were maintained.

LAUDS PROGRESS HERE.

"It would be a revelation to our people of forty years ago to see the kind of homes in which their children and grandchildren were beginning to live. I do not think there is a large city in this country where there is a community of colored people living together in such numbers as you do here which has made so rapid progress in so short a time.

"All this imposes a heavy responsibility. In a section of the city where the colored people are in the majority, the colored people are responsible for conditions in that portion of the city. If there is drunkenness, if there is gamb-

ling, if there is crime, the colored people will be held responsible, because this is a recognized colored community.

"I wish to emphasize particularly to members of my race who have come here from the South, where they have had little or no share in the government by which they are controlled, that here in Chicago a new and grave responsibility rests upon them in that respect. It rests on the Negroes of Chicago to demonstrate to the world to what extent a Negro community like this, amid all the temptations of a great city, can make itself a united, progressive, law-abiding community, one that will be looked up to and respected.

SAYS NEGROES MUST UNITE

"In order to accomplish this we must unite ourselves with all the forces in this city that are striving for better things. We must unite all the best element among ourselves. The local business league can exercise a wide influence in this direction. It can do this by putting its influence behind the man or the business who is really trying to do a good thing.

"At the present time there are more than 270,000,000 acres of unused and unoccupied land in the South and West. In fact, one-half of the land in the South and two-thirds of the lands in the West is still unused. Now is the time for us to become the owners and users of our share before it is too late. From ownership of the soil comes independence, self-support, happiness, and real manhood rights. Land that can be gotten at \$10 an acre now, a few years hence cannot be gotten for two and three times as much.

"There are places in the South for 5,000 additional dry goods stores and there are colored people enough to support them. In the South the Negro merchant is not dependent on the trade of his own race alone.

SAYS WHITE MEN PATRONIZE NEGROES

"Not only the colored man trades at the colored man's dry goods store, but the best white people are not afraid to patronize a first class Negro store. The same thing is true of other business enterprises owned and controlled by colored people.

"There are openings in the south for at least 8,000 additional grocery stores, for 3,500 drug stores. There are openings in the south for 2,000 shoe stores, 1,500 millinery stores, and there are communities in the south where 2,000 negro banks can be operated and supported. Further than this, there are places in the south where at least twenty-five self-governing, self-supporting, self-directing towns or cities may be established, where the colored people can have their own mayor, their own board of aldermen, their own self-government from every point of view. In

the last analysis, local self-government is the most precious kind of government.

"All that I am here advocating and emphasizing does not mean the limitation or circumscribing of our race mentally, morally, civilly, or in other directions, but it does mean real growth and real independence in all these directions."

NEGROES REVEAL SUCCESS SECRETS

Say Business Opportunities Depend on Willingness to Work Well and Honestly

"PUT BAR ON COLOR LINE"

"Patronize Your Own People," Advises One Speaker at Chicago Convention

Business opportunities for the American Negro depend on his willingness to work well and honestly. Courage, imagination, effort, and energy are the groundwork of success in industrial pursuits.

This is the story being told and retold by successful Negro business men and educators at the thirteenth annual meeting of the National Negro Business League at Institutional church, 3324 South Dearborn street.

"The Negro never will be able to accomplish anything by sitting around and complaining," said Charles Banks, vice president, in calling the organization to order yesterday. "The Negro has it in his power to accomplish wonders in the fields of industry if he but shows industry, honesty, and thrift."

PUBLISHER TELLS SUCCESS

Dr. R. H. Boyd of Nashville, Tenn., told of the growth of a publishing business which he started in 1896, without assistance and with little capital. Today, according to Dr. Boyd, the business employs about 200 Negro men and is rated at \$350,000.

"The Negro should start out for himself and be willing to work well and honestly to accomplish something," Dr. Boyd said. "It is imperative for the welfare of the race that we as Negroes should produce, should manufacture some of everything we consume."

J. H. Phillips, Montgomery, Ala., told of industrial insurance as developed by and among Negroes. He said the Mutual Aid Association of Mobile, Ala., which started sixteen years ago with a membership of six, had written over \$10,000,000 worth of business and had paid to beneficiaries more than \$3,100,000. Five hundred Negro men and women are employed by the company in Florida, Alabama, and Mississippi.

W. H. Bell, Evansville, Ind., related how he had started on a salary of 50 cents a day and now owns and controls a business which pays taxes on \$20,000 worth of property.

NEVER DRAWS COLOR LINE.

"I never draw the color line," said L. W. McIntyre of Louisiana. "When I want a house I draw the plans and let the contractors submit bids and let the work to the lowest responsible bidder, whether he is white or black. We cannot afford to draw the color line."

"The success of the Negro depends on the encouragement he receives from his own people as well as upon the honest effort he makes to succeed," declared Joseph L. Jones of Cincinnati, O., manager of the Central Regalia Company. "Every mother and father," he said, "should encourage their children to buy candy from negro merchants. They should patronize a Negro grocer, and, when sick, call a Negro doctor."

THE NEGRO BUSINESS LEAGUE

(Chicago Tribune Editorial)

The National Negro Business League, which held its thirteenth annual convention this week in Chicago, is one of several means which Dr. Booker T. Washington, its founder and president, has devised to encourage and direct his people in their efforts to help themselves. This league, which was organized in Boston twelve years ago, has now extended its influence through local leagues to nearly every part of the United States where there are any considerable number of colored people living. It has local organizations in thirty-two states, and in ten southern states these local leagues have united to form state organizations.

In 1906 there was organized, in close affiliation with the business league, the National Negro Bankers' Association. This was followed by the organization of the Negro Press Association and the Negro Bar Association, each of which organizations holds its sessions separately but in connection with the meetings of the league.

Some notion of the variety and general character of the work and influence of these subsidiary organizations may be gathered from the recently issued twelfth annual report. At the last meeting of the league, for example, a delegate from St. Denis, Md., which seems to be a little country village in the midst of a rich truck farming country, reported that the members of the local organization at that place—most of whom, like himself, were prosperous farmers—had organized the previous year an association for co-operative buying, and had made a saving the first year of \$300 in the cost of fertilizer alone. This first attempt at co-operative buying had been so successful that they proposed to do the same thing on a grander scale the following year. It has been frequently suggested that co-operative associations such as exist among the small farmers in every part of Europe might offer a solution of the problem of the Negro farmer in the south, but this is the first instance of which we have any report where the experiment has been tried.

Another delegate from the little Negro town of Boley, Okla., which claims the distinction of having a population of 4,000 without a single white inhabitant, reported that the business league at that place was doing the work of a chamber of commerce. It was advertising the town throughout the south, promoting immigration, assisting in the establishment of new enterprises, and in general promoting the business interests of the town. Boley already has a waterworks system, an electric lighting plant, four cotton gins, not to speak of five churches and a Masonic Temple, and continues to grow and prosper.

On the other hand, the report of the Negro Bankers Association, which represents some twenty-five of the sixty-one Negro banks in the whole of the United States, reported that plans were in preparation to establish a strong central bank in which each of the smaller banks, being members of the association, would be required to deposit a reserve fund, and this reserve would then be the means of mutual control and support to all its members.

These instances illustrate some of the many ways in which the Negro Business League is helping the Negro people to turn to use the opportunities about them; to build up, out of their poverty and inexperience, strong and substantial business institutions, which will secure to them and their children some of the fruits of their labor and enable future generations to begin their life on a higher plane than that of their predecessors.

NEGRO'S COLOR NO HANDICAP?

Speakers Say Black Skin Is No Bar to Success

FORTY BANKERS AS EXHIBIT

Man Who Was Born a Slave Now Heads \$100,000 Concern

Negro business men and merchants from all sections of the country were introduced yesterday before the National Negro Business League at Institutional church, 3824 South Dearborn street, as proof that color is no bar to success.

Growth of Mound Bayou, Miss., from a few shacks to a prosperous business community, with a population of more than 1,000 Negroes, was told by Isaiah T. Montgomery, founder of the town. It now has a bank, a Carnegie library, oil and lumber mills, churches, a co-operative mercantile house, and other institutions.

WAS BORN A SLAVE.

"I was born a slave in 1847 on a plantation owned by Joseph E. Davis, brother of the confederate president," the speaker said. "In 1887, being attracted by the Yazoo delta land, I established a colony. The town now compares favorably with other towns of its size in the state. The town is inhabited exclusively by Negroes and I am president of a \$100,000 company which recently has erected a large mill for making cottonseed oil. The land, which some years ago might have been bought for \$1 an acre, now is held at \$100 an acre."

Forty Negro bankers attended the last day's session of the league and told of their success. W. R. Pettiford told how the Penny Savings bank was organized in Birmingham, Ala., twenty-two years ago.

"As a race," he said, "we must enter every field occupied by other people, and if we fail in this we will never be able to take a place in the industrial world."

NEGRO LAWYER SUCCEEDS

P. W. Howard of Jackson, Miss., a lawyer, told of progress being made by professional men among his race, and predicted the success of any Negro with ambition and willingness to work hard.

"Some persons may consider the idea of North or South," said S. E. Wiggins, Little Rock, Ark., "but a man is a man the world over and will be recognized as such if he shows the proper respect for himself and for others."

PLEADS FOR "SIMPLE JUSTICE" FOR THE AMERICAN NEGRO

Judge Marcus Kavanagh Advocates National Commission to Investigate Existing Prejudices

(From Chicago Tribune of Oct. 12, 1913)

In a plea for "simple justice" for the American Negro Judge Marcus Kavanagh of the Superior Court in a speech before the Irish Fellowship club at the Hotel La Salle yesterday, advocated the appointment of a national commission to inquire into existing prejudices which bar Negroes of good education from competing with whites in the business world. His subject was "The Future of the American Negro."

"In 1790 there were less than 800,000 Negroes in this country, and today we have more than 10,000,000," he said. "Few of these are of pure African blood, and nearly all have white blood; millions more white than black. Here they are about us, with white men's hearts and white men's brains, but shut out from everything in this life worth while.

"What is the cure for this situation? Why, the same simple cure that has remedied every social evil since the world began—simple justice. The first thing to be done is to free ourselves from prejudices, then to free others; and I propose the appointment of a national commission to take evidence and report on this matter."

These are but the signs of the times, and indicate the truth of the inevitable progress that is bound to ensue from a broader, more unselfish policy, as outlined here.

The Negro has a brain—his race has numbers. Show him how to use these two elements of progress for the collective gain of his own people, and *then give him the chance to do it!* He is adaptable—he has every faculty of the white man. A great number of his race are

themselves partly white. Then let the white man help him to organize along these lines, and he will help himself and help the white man, too; and forming a social aristocracy of his own, like the Jew, he will have no *need* or *desire* for social recognition by the aristocracy of the white Christian, just as the Jew has none.

Let us help him to open up *more expeditiously* those fields of labor and mechanical skill, of clerical and sales activities, of trades and professions, from which he is temporarily barred, by making it possible for him to establish in each of them independent owning corporations of his *own* which can and will employ his own race, after they have been properly taught by white experts in each line taken up, until the quality of their workmanship is equal to that of white industrial workers; and then their products will sell anywhere on their own merits, just as do those of the Jews. The man who says or believes that the Negroes are a degraded race, and always will be, "there isn't any help for them, and you can't make anything of them if you try!" is himself hopelessly behind the times.

But beyond all this, let us not forget that our highest prerogative is to be American citizens; our highest ideal to improve the standard of living of each and every one of us; our high-

est safety to hasten the homogeneity of our numerous races of compatriots—and that the Negroes have come to stay, and must be reckoned with in all these respects. Let us remember, too, that they are *human* and have hearts that suffer and minds that unconsciously grope toward higher things, and that *poverty without opportunity* is *akin* to *slavery*.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN was kind to them—let us be kinder—He would wish it. A race for whose bodily freedom so many brave men fought and died, so many noble women starved and mourned and suffered; cannot be abandoned to an ignoble fate without stultifying ourselves and Him, remembering, as we must, the incalculable cost and sacrifice at which our fathers set them free.

We must help them repay that tremendous gift by enabling them, through our advice and assistance and planning, to become of far, far greater service, both to themselves and ourselves, that the blood of our fathers and our mother's tears shall *not* prove to have been shed in vain. We should keep ever before us the one tangible, logical, economic, selfish fact, that the more prosperous we can aid the Negroes to become, the more benefit will come back to us from that same prosperity we help to engender in them.

The constant, unceasing, increasing tendency and demand of all races and conditions of men and women leads now towards greater financial and legal equality—greater industrial and social justice. Within the cycle of the last few years hundreds of new commercial, industrial, educational and professional fields have been thrown open to white women, especially in our own country of the United States, and which must indubitably lead to universal equal suffrage for them, as it has already done locally in several states. The proletariat of every nation is now rising and demanding, and overturning the deadening sod of indifference to their wants and desires and aspirations which has long kept them buried in social oblivion. Separated yet simultaneously, they are all striving together towards a new birth of Freedom. And in these days of quick transit and lightning-swift, far-flung dissemination of the daily news of the world, *les misérables* of each country are learning of the quickened struggles of their submerged contemporaries in every other country—are comparing notes and urging each other on in the good work. And so, happily, the mental uprising will continue till men are sufficiently civilized and human to do justice without being forced at the point of the bayonet.

Can we consistently expect the Negro not to be warmed, if not inflamed, by this same spirit of unrest and uplift—that is in the very air we breathe?

Although the North American Negroes now are but a race, and not an autonomous nation by themselves, they cannot be left behind by us in the general march of advance of all mankind. Our American body politic cannot now be, and continue increasingly to become, healthy, vigorous and truly progressive so long as it permits a single member of its composing races to lag behind in sickness of spirit, paucity of opportunity and comparative retrogression of condition. We are one and indivisible in the great order of creation and humanity; and “*progress is inevitable!*”

And it is altogether better and safer and more profitable to act the “good Samaritan” towards the Negro *now*, than to delay until that course is forced upon us by our own need of their salvation—what time it is forcibly borne in upon us that, even in the human sense, “a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.”

The history of all unprogressive countries, and that of our own Southern States, is a perpetually reiterated lesson to us that the nation which neglects its dependents neglects itself.

CHAPTER XV.

THE BUM



JOHN'S own secret misery during these two years had the purifying and ennobling result of opening his heart to the misfortunes and disabilities of others who, financially at least, were more to be pitied than himself; and a fellow-feeling for their unhappiness and haunting want caused him to watch out for chances to help such of them as he incidentally ran across, and even to hunt up cases of unusual and unmerited destitution.

Such outright charity and such temporary aid to struggling honesty and effort as he could afford, he did not trust to the cold indifference, hostile and untactful red tape and grafting favoritism of paid employees of charity organizations, as is commonly done by the rich today, but preferred to dispense unheralded and with his own hands and judgment. Thus he saved his beneficiaries from the shame of publicity and from the prying, classifying, common-leveling, indiscriminating, lie-breeding methods of the semi-public charitable societies, whose operating expenses and salaries often eat up half the contributions received, before they reached their supposed recipients.

Wise private and personal application of humanitarianism is as much better in its effects upon the really deserving, as much more preferred and as much less dreaded by those who really ought to be helped, than is organized charity, as the latter is less dreaded and more preferred than the "county agent," dispenser (†) of the city's appropriations for charitable purposes—the necessity of having to turn to whom for help is in turn less distressing and disgracing than practical imprisonment and the separation of man and wife in the county poor house (half filled with the senilely imbecile and the mildly insane).

In personally investigated and personally aided cases of partial or total destitution or lack of work, the philanthropically inclined give not only their money and influence, but also their time, brains and sympathy—that milk of human kindness—and they do not have to treat all applicants alike, making mere machines of themselves and those they would aid—as is, by the way, the growing tendency of corporations and many large firms to do now in their dealings with and rules for their employees and customers in their mercenary attempts to eliminate the *human equation* from business. This attempted destruction of personality may go on,

but it will some day react upon these economizers of smiles.

One rainy night in the cold spring of the second year of John's manufacturing apprenticeship, he had dined down-town with a former college class-mate who was taking a late train out of the city.

After seeing his friend off at the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railway station in Van Buren street, he had walked east to Clark street on his way to the street car, when his attention was attracted by the peculiar actions and miserable plight of a middle-aged man standing at the outside edge of the sidewalk on the corner, unsheltered from the slowly-driving rain. The man was raggedly dressed, with broken shoes, a battered derby hat and no overcoat; and although he was shivering as with a chill and rocking on his feet in drunken weakness, he made no move to get under cover from the inclement weather; but every minute or two he would plunge out into the street from the raised sidewalk, and then invariably hesitate, with the vacillation of intoxication, and return to his former position on the sidewalk. He was eating something he extracted in broken pieces from a dirty paper bag in a desultory way, and gazing straight ahead, unmindful of his surroundings and occasional curious observers.

John backed up against a lighted show-window and stood there, under his umbrella, for several minutes, fascinated by the danger the besotted brute tempted of being run over by street cars or wagons in his repeated "sortees" into the street; his ready sympathy quickening for the poor devil as he perceived that no one else glanced at him a second time or made any motion towards taking him in hand.

Crossing the street to the diagonally opposite corner, John approached a policeman stationed there like a "fixed star," and in a quiet manner called his official heeding to the drunken man's dangerous condition and situation. The "cop" merely shrugged his shoulders, saying:

"Shure, he don't want me to 'run him in'; he's all right—just a little 'biled,' that's all; say! you must be a grane one aroun' here, or you'd know this strate is full of 'barrel-house' bums like him. I cud fill ther whole domned station wid 'em! But what 'ud be the use?—they've got no money to pay ther jedge wid. Lave him be! I need me beauty slape in ther morning, and can't stay up till noon hanging aroun' ther durthy coort rooms to appear agin' the likes o' him. G'wan now! there's nawthin' in it!"

John, thinking the roundsman probably spoke out of the wisdom of experience, retraced

his steps, and, going into the corner store, asked a clerk to change a five-dollar bill for him. At the man's askant look he explained that he wanted the change so he could give something to the human derelict outside, pointing him out to the clerk at the same time. The latter smiled ironically and shook his head, remonstrating that it was a common sight there and that the man was, no doubt, a "dope fiend," to whom money would do no good. In spite of this second admonition that he was only throwing away his time and money, John remained on the corner watching the pitiable creature for fully ten minutes. Then, just as he had about made up his mind to touch his sleeve and accost him in words, the man made another lurch back into the roadway, and this time continued across to the other side of Clark street.

John followed him south on his own side of the street until he saw him climbing the long inside front steps of a fifteen-cent lodging house, where he fell exhausted halfway up. Some fateful impulse—some unaccountable interest stronger than simple compassion, in this particular bum—led John to cross over and assist him up to the dingy office of the "hotel." There he asked the coatless, pipe-smoking clerk in charge to let him occupy one of the "horse-

stall" bed-rooms, and guaranteed his small bill, remarking that he would call there again next evening to talk with the tramp.

The clerk grumpily hustled his new guest off to bed without deeming it worth while to ask him if he had any "valuables" to deposit in the office safe. The sodden mass of limp humanity had not uttered a word of either thanks or remonstrance during these proceedings, but acquiesced in them in a dumb brute way. He did not even look at John as the clerk conducted him up a second flight of uncarpeted stairs. The latter waited for the clerk's return, when he handed him a silver dollar for food for his "protégé," and requested him to tell him in the morning, or have him told by the day clerk, that it would be well, for his own sake, to sober up before he saw him again.

When John once more entered the low rooming house, early on the following night, he found his man up and "dressed" and seated in a soiled, high-backed, wooden office chair, amusing himself by looking out into the well-lighted and well-thronged street. He appeared to be in a reasonably sober state (for him) and turned to John expectantly and questioningly when he pulled up a chair alongside of him and asked him "How he felt now?" After a few commonplace remarks, John asked him,

casually raising his eyes to the office clock, "if he felt like taking a bite of something yet; or whether his stomach was still too weak to hold 'solid' food." This he did in the hope of inducing him to let him escort him to some moderate-priced restaurant in the vicinity, where they might secure a table all by themselves and talk confidentially; for he wished to learn, if he could, the man's history and plans, if any, for the future, before deciding what to do for him.

The bum was now hungry, for a wonder, and presently the two found themselves seated at one of the few small tables in a sparsely-filled lunch room a block away, where John ordered a "slaughter-in-the-pan" (hash-house steak) and "draw-one" (cup of muddy coffee) for his companion, nibbling on an emaciated, cadaverous slice of pie himself as he waited for him to fill up and grow "mellow." John did not "use the filthy weed," but ordered more coffee and a couple of "stinkers" (rank cigars) for the other when he had done "stowing the grub"; and after a dozen solacing puffs on "the big cigar of the Havana," the prodigal began of his own accord the story of his life. Most of the tale was prosaic and sorry enough, the common story of the average "has been" of the underworld, but one strange adventure in it was out of the ordinary and held John spell-bound

throughout its entire recital. Divested of as much as possible of the idiom in which the man narrated it, a conglomerate mixture of American slang, French-Canadian patois and half-breed Indian dialect, this long but remarkable chapter of his history ran as follows:

CHAPTER XVI.

THE BUM'S LONG TALE OF HIS REMARKABLE ADVENTURE



“ABOUT twenty-one to twenty-two years ago I was a frontiersman in Middle-Western Canada. I had saved a little money (principally because I had no chance to spend it there), and was plodding along comfortably enough in a rough way, when I became infatuated with a woman, whose name would not interest you (one of those few of her sex who had drifted that far west), and who, while claiming to have independent means of her own, was secretly a courtesan, as I found out later. She was, in the very nature of the circumstances, much sought after by the ignorant and lonesome men around her, but she pretended to give my attentions the preference over all others. I was quite young then, barely of age, and had had little experience with women of her sort, or of any sort for that matter; so I believed all she told me, just as she had intended I should do.

“There was one particularly obnoxious bully in the little settlement, however, to whom she

had evidently permitted still greater personal liberties with herself than she allowed me; and we, as rough men will, began to eye each other like two rival bucks coveting the same doe.

"To make a long story short, this bully, as I supposed, shot at me from ambush one dark night in late winter. I was unarmed at the time. I had long suspected him of some such cowardly intention, from his bragging and slurring talk about me among the other men, and I knew I had no other enemy there, so I instantly concluded it was he who fired the shot; and when I found I was not hit by his bullets, I thought quickly and dropped to the ground as though dead—played 'possum' in fact. I was partially covered by the low thicket where I fell, but knew that he dared not approach me to see how badly I might be wounded for fear of disclosing his own identity.

"I heard him making his way cautiously out of the woods and towards the settlement; still I lay there for another half hour, waiting to learn whether anyone else had heard the shot; but no one came near me. Then I got up stealthily and turned off in the opposite direction. After a couple of hours' tramp I reached the camp of a half-breed Indian trapper, about ten miles to the southeast, whom I had befriended on several occasions and in whose

friendship and secrecy I felt I could trust. He was, fortunately, in camp, and took me in with little explanation on my part, agreeing to secrete me there for a couple of days, until my plans ripened.

“There was little or no legal justice to be had in that wilderness in those early pioneering days, except for such public opinion as might express itself through brute force or the swinging rope, and I knew that I must either ‘get’ my enemy or let him ‘get’ me—or one of us must leave the immediate neighborhood.

“I was hot-blooded by nature and, besides, was really enamored of the woman who was the cause of all the trouble between us; and I determined that I would not run from him, but would ‘get’ him first, as according to the crude ethics of that place and date his attempt upon my life amply justified me in taking his, and with as little danger as possible of exposing my own connection with his death.

“Leaving the trapper’s hut alone on the second night of my hiding, I entered the small wilderness colony unobserved and began my vigils for a chance of catching the bully off his guard. I figured that if no one had reported the finding of my dead body in the woods by this time, he would have been more than likely to go back to the scene of his attempted

murder to make sure of his work—drawn there, too, perhaps, by that magnetic attraction which is said to compel a murderer, even against his own will and judgment, to return to the fatal spot where his crime was committed. If so, he would by now, of course, have discovered there the absence of any trace of my corpse, and would at once conjecture that I had escaped alive and be on the lookout for my reprisal.

“For two days more I hid in the outskirts, and finally, on the third morning, trailed him into the timber until the settlement lay beyond the sound of a gun-shot. I came upon him just as he was crossing a wide, semi-circular opening flanked by the continuous forest. He heard the crackling of a twig under my foot, and swung around on his heel just as I was about to emerge from the edge of the tree-line behind him.

“We both drew and fired at the same instant, but he carried only a large revolver, while I was ‘toting’ a rifle. Two shots rang out in the opening; I felt his ball tearing through my left sleeve, grazing my arm, and instinctively I jumped for a protecting tree-trunk. Peering around the edge of my shelter warily after a minute or two, I saw him lying prone and motionless on the coarse grass, which was but thinly covered by the snow. Holding my rifle

in firing position lest he be only feigning unconsciousness in order to entrap me, I stepped slowly and vigilantly towards him, until I could see his face bathed in blood and his revolver reclining a few feet away, where it had slipped from his apparently lifeless hand. I went up close to him and examined his body hurriedly for any evidence of life, but found none. My bullet had entered the upper part of his forehead.

“At such a time one does not reason exhaustively, and in the trepidation and fear of pursuit of one who has just taken the life of a human being, I turned about and fled the fearsome spot. I kept to the woods all that day. The night came on early and dark; there were no lamps in the single main street of the uncouth village, and I haunted its environs until my reappearance among the houses should be safe from discovery. I then slunk along to the back door of the one-story affair occupied by the ‘bold’ woman whom I still imagined to be in love with me, and rapped on it with a muffled hand.

“She came to the door in her night-dress and, at my insistent demands, opened it just wide enough to let me pass in, she trembling in terror before my ghastly face and stealthy movements and shifting glances. The one lamp

the house contained was turned low in the front room, but we stood together in the semi-obscurity of her bed-room while I rapidly acquainted her in disconnected whispers with the tragic happenings of the past five days and their awful conclusion. I told her I must fly at once—that very minute—for the United States border, and implored her, as she loved me, to follow after me later and meet me at a certain street and number in St. Paul where an old ‘pal’ of mine hung out, and to write me in advance of her coming if she could find a way to get the letter off—addressed to me under cover of my St. Paul friend’s name.

“She clung about my neck in her deshabelle and kissed me passionately and cried, and swore by all that was holy that she would neither betray me nor fail to join me a week or two later; and she made into a bundle what food she had ready-cooked in the house and handed it to me for my flight.

“Being a natural carpenter, I had built for myself a one-room shack, and a small shed back of it on the edge of a narrow gully; in which latter crude shelter I kept a small, wiry, western horse for which I had several months before traded with a wandering Indian. There were no locks on the doors of any of the rude buildings, and keeping in the shadows I crept

to my little place and had no difficulty in getting into it unnoticed. I packed up in a hurry what I most needed to take with me; my small store of money I always carried on my person. Going quickly to the shed, I found the pony had been well provided for during my absence, as in so small a community all the horses are individually known, and are remembered practically if their masters fail to show up for twenty-four hours. Holding my nag by the nose so he couldn't whinny his delight at seeing me again, I saddled him silently, adjusted my packs to his back, before and behind the saddle, and led him into the narrow depression behind the shed. I mounted him, and holding him down to a walk till out of sight and hearing of my fellow-citizens, was soon off and away along the back trail to the southeast and Winnipeg. I hoped to make that important city in a little over three days, and to dispose of my mount there and pursue the rest of my journey to the United States by rail, with St. Paul as my temporary destination. Beyond that I had not planned.

"The snow was not deep, as the spring was nearly due, and my horse was half-wild and inured to long stages of traveling through his former experience as an Indian mount. The only danger I had really to guard against was

a pursuit by a possé from the settlement if the body of the slain man were found the next day; for although he had been a bully and a 'periodical spreér' and was more than suspected of cheating at cards, he, like every other man, no matter how bad, had his friends, flatterers and followers among his own kind, and who would like nothing better than such a chance at that most exciting of all huntings—the man-hunt—with myself for their quarry.

"I stayed in the saddle and kept the pony moving all that night and till the following noon, then hid myself and my horse in the heaviest thicket I could find until darkness again descended on the wild. When, seeing or hearing no signs of a pursuit, I remounted and rode on throughout the night, my path lighted by the whiteness of the snow. We slept and rested half the next day, as before. Late on the third night, when both the faithful beast and myself were becoming fagged out with the long, continuous strain (for we maintained a quick gait), we came unexpectedly upon indications of a new lumbering centre, and I stopped to reconnoiter before proceeding further. I had purposely avoided inhabited localities and the Canadian mounted police, so that no news of my passing could reach my probable pursuers. (The first night out I had turned back on my

tracks and gone around in a circuitous, irregular way to put them off my trail as best I could.)

“Now, waiting till past midnight, I guided my horse into a long ravine in order to avoid the loggers’ camp and get by it unseen. A heavy fall of snow had already begun, the first since I began my escape, with a fairly brisk wind blowing; and I calculated that the new snow would drift into this ravine and completely cover my trail before sunrise. I was riding along carefully, threading my way through and around the obstructing bushes and stones, and had covered about half the length of the ravine, when my fear-sharpened ears caught a low sound. Looking up to the left in the direction from which it seemed to come, I beheld a dark object, like a heavy man wrapped in furs and looking right at me, dimly outlined on the snow, at the edge of the hollow and just above me.

“I awaited gun-in-hand the anticipated challenge, but none was given. I slid to the ground on the opposite side of my pony and edged intermittently and with crafty caution up the incline of the farther bank, screening myself, as I proceeded, behind the wild shrubbery. Soon I was nearly on a level with the dark object, which, so far, had not moved. Suddenly it

dropped to all fours and disappeared around a large boulder nearly as tall as a man. I breathed a great sigh of relief, for in that instant I comprehended that it was not a man at all, but a good-sized bear.

“It was out of the question to fire at it and thus awaken the whole camp, which could not be far away, and I was fully content to leave ‘Mrs. Bruin’ alone if she would me; but I crossed over to her side a couple of hundred yards lower down the gulch, merely out of curiosity as to her unaccountable instantaneous disappearance. There was the boulder all right, but no bear anywhere near it and no bear tracks leading away from it. While I was cudgeling my befogged brains for a plausible solution of the strange phenomenon, I happened to gaze away in another direction for a few seconds. When I turned to scrutinize the big boulder again, there was the bear once more—dropped down from nowhere!

“It was eerie and got on my nerves, so that I gave voice to my astonishment and wonder in an unrestrainable ‘—Hell!’ The bear heard me and instantly took fright, and scampered away towards the heavier growth of timber, closely followed by two little cubs, which, also, appeared suddenly out of clear space. I went up to the heavy, perpendicular stone and

stepped all around it, examining it carefully, but could perceive no aperture in it, nor in the ground adjacent to it. In moving about it, though, in the semi-luminosity of the reflecting snow, I undesignedly traced its outlines with my hands; and at one point in the circle of my investigation, I thought I felt the mass stir to my touch. Pressing repeatedly on the boulder at that point with both hands, I found I could displace it readily; but it always rolled back gently to its original position—it was a ‘rocking stone’!

“Just then I heard a faint, distant, human cry, and bolstering up the huge stone with a broken tree-bough, I could discern a narrow opening beneath it and leading into a natural fissure in the rocky bank. I listened carefully, and the sound was repeated; it came to me like the smothered cry of an infant.

“Utterly dumbfounded by this new, further mystifying phase of my adventure, I struck a match and held it at arm’s-length inside the hole to see how the fissure ran. Satisfied that it was not deep, I let myself down into it feet-first. I found I was able to touch bottom without releasing my grasp on the ground above. Encouraged by this, I let go and got down on my hands and knees, and crawled along the cave-like, covered, natural cut into the interior

of the solid bank. Arriving at its innermost recess, I groped about until my hands came in contact with some woollen texture that seemed to move. Striking another match, I nearly fell over on beholding the astounding sight its light revealed. Here, in this undiscoverable bear's retreat, lying on its back and blinking at the burning match, was a *living baby!*

"I could scarcely credit my own senses, but had the presence of mind to gather up the infant tenderly and work my way out with it into the air again. It had no outer wraps, but was otherwise warmly dressed. However, I protected it against the abrupt change in temperature, on passing from the bear's den to the outside air, by covering it with the folds of my heavy buffalo skin overcoat (these coats were common then). I removed and threw away the supporting bough and let the 'rocking-stone' fall back into its normal position, where it effectually concealed the bear's lair.

"I was in such a horrible quandary that I almost forgot my own serious predicament. I knew not which way to turn. If I left the child there, it would die of exposure and starvation. If I sought the logging camp clearing to return it to its probably agonized parents, I would gravely endanger my own freedom—perhaps be caught and hanged by the possé

through the clew I must necessarily leave behind me there. If I took it with me on my lone journey, how could I feed it at its tender age?

"I wondered how long it could have lain hidden in the bear's underground home and how it had been kept from starving. Until, in passing my hands over its face, I discovered what looked and felt like traces of *milk* on the corners of its little mouth. I recollected then a legend I once heard in my boyhood's days of two afterwards famous characters having been once suckled by a she-wolf (Romulus and Remus, I think they were called)—I had once seen a picture of them and the wolf in some old book, too. Maybe this animal who had adopted the baby was an escaped trained bear—maybe I was so wrought up I was 'nutty.' I finally gave up trying to 'dope it out.' But there was the baby all unhurt and with no visible symptoms of hunger about it, there was no doubt of that much. This heartened me up quite a bit, especially as the kid seemed to trust me completely and clung to me, like I was its own father, only crying a little and softly, as though it had already cried so much it could cry no more. I made up my mind, since the babe couldn't talk and tell me where it lived, and it looked strong and healthy, that

it was safest and best to take it along with me, at least as far as Winnipeg, where I could, no doubt, arrange to have it properly cared for till I had made my own 'get-away.' Later I would think up some way to bring about its triumphant return to its unexpectant parents. I even mused happily and humorously over their wide-eyed wonderment and bubbling gratitude—when it should be placed in their distracted arms again. The whole affair would beat a dime novel story!—what the English call a 'penny-dreadful.'

"I wrapped the baby warmly in my blanket and placed it on the saddle in front of me and resumed with it my tedious journey. I occasionally stopped to give it water, and I allowed it to munch a little dry bread crumbs as we went along. When I stopped at noon of the next day I knew, from our position, that we could make Winnipeg during the second night following. I overhauled my diminishing supply of grub and found an unopened tin of extract of beef (in the bundle I got from the woman). I lighted a small fire among the trees, where its smoke would not be seen, and boiling a tin-cupful of water over it, dropped extract into it a bit at a time till I had a mild beef tea, which I hoped the kid could digest. It was that or starve for it, anyhow. It seemed to

work all right, for the baby sipped it all gratefully and grinned at me. So now I had solved the puzzle of feeding it, and was overjoyed at my own ingenuity. The weather grew milder, with the tang of spring in the air, and the succeeding twenty-four hours passed uneventfully.

“On the last stretch, nearing Winnipeg, I spurred my weary nag to a livelier gate, as I did not want to make the child sleep out in the open another night. A fellow who knows nothing about babies is more afraid of handling them than of nursing rattle-snakes. It was about ten o'clock at night when we finally struck the city's outskirts (it was of only about fifteen thousand population then), and within a half hour after that I had put up the horse, which was about ready to drop, at a small out-of-the-way roadside tavern sporting a bar and a barn. (The ordinances of many Canadian cities require all licensed saloons to provide at least twelve sleeping rooms and a stable for wayfarers and their beasts of burden). I turned over the baby, in apple pie order and sound asleep, to the landlord's matronly wife and helpmate, saying I would explain things in the morning. They gave me plenty of hot coffee (which I hadn't tasted in two days) and set out such cold 'vittles' as they could scrape up at that unconventional hour; but I was about all

in; and leaving the baby in the motherly hands of the old woman, I followed the landlord with a candle to a small, coarsely furnished cubby-hole of a bed-room, and in five minutes forgot the world and all my troubles in the care-forgetting, perfect sleep of physical and mental exhaustion. I didn't even dream.

"I had requested 'mine host' not to call me till ten o'clock, and I slept through the night and early morning without awaking, until he pounded on my door. They had saved some breakfast in the stove-oven for me and added more hot coffee and a pile of steaming 'flap-jacks.' Rested and refreshed, I plunged at once into my preparations for taking up again the thread of my enforced trip to the United States. I gave my low-browed, cunning, French-Canadian host a 'song and dance' about taking the baby from its mother in the Northwest to its grandmother in the States because the mother felt she could not bring it up properly so far from civilization; and I ensured his silence in regard to my presence at his hotel in a more practical way by hinting that my horse was a stolen one and selling it to him for less than half its value. The cute little baby was turned up fresh and cooing; and as I dared not stop here, on Canadian soil, long enough to arrange for its return to its parents,

I decided to take it on with me to St. Paul and try to locate its home by mail before 'shipping' it back there.

"I sent the proprietor's wife down on Main street, which even then had begun to stand out boldly in the impressiveness of its great width, to buy an outside coat and such additional 'duds' as she thought the baby needed for immediate wear; and in a few hours we were aboard a day-coach on the train running south-east to St. Paul, some eight hundred miles away.

"From the first the baby had shown no fear of me, but appeared to accept my presence and caresses as a matter of course, simply eyeing me wistfully and whimpering now and then. It had probably spent all of its young life in the woods, surrounded and worshiped by the rough logging crew, and so was used to men's faces and friendly attentions. I kept telling it I was taking it to 'mama,' which word it seemed to understand, although it couldn't talk, but just gurgled incomprehensible things.

"It was a beautiful little boy, perfectly formed with a dark French-Canadian face, but of a higher type so far as its features were yet shaped. We crossed the border without let or hindrance, and I began to breath freely for the first time. I relaxed in my seat and I'm sure my eyes must have lost their hunted, shift

look. The south-bound cars were not crowded like those going north with immigrants and settlers, and I made a comfortable couch for the baby by spreading out my blanket on the reversed seat in front of me where I could keep my eye on it, dozing off myself at intervals during our one night on the train, which was a slow local carrying one through day-coach. We arrived in St. Paul late on the second night and stopped at a cheap, second class hotel down by the depot till noon of the next day. In so large a city, with so many transients and immigrant families and parts of families passing through every day in the week, we excited no suspicions and I was asked no embarrassing questions as to my lone possession of so young a child.

“Meanwhile I had sent a sealed note to my ‘pal’ by a newsboy I ran across at Third and Wabasha streets, near the City Hall, telling where *we* were. By good luck he happened to be at home late that morning, and he came to us at the hotel within the hour. Half an hour’s talk between us put him in possession of all the facts in the case and of the present necessities of my unusual position. Getting into a livery rig belonging to a personal friend of his who could keep his mouth shut, we were driven to a point within a short walk of his little story-

and-a-half frame cottage. Dismissing the rig there, we went the rest of the way on foot. My 'pal' had married since I had last seen him, and his young wife made a big fuss over the kiddie and got 'stuck on' him at sight; so *his* troubles were over for a while.

"I had not shaved since my impromptu duel in the Northern country, and now kept off the street in the day time until my beard was pretty well grown. It changed my appearance so much I hardly recognized myself in the mirror. After a few days, as I had received no word from the woman who was to follow and meet me here, I began to grow impatient, and my fears to revive.

"Of course I was remorseful and despondent, but the fact that in our deadly encounter the bully had drawn on me the instant he saw me, coupled with his supposed previous attack on me from ambush and my natural jealousy of his attentions to the woman, kept me from such conscious-stricken despair as might, otherwise, have overwhelmed me. I was not a 'bad man' and this was my first serious affray; and I tried to put aside my depression until my sweetheart should come and fully inform me of all that had occurred in the settlement after I skipped out. I had been in St. Paul over a week and began to despair of her, when one

Saturday afternoon she knocked at the door of the cottage and asked for me.

“My friend’s wife would not open the door till I had surreptitiously identified her through the shutters of the one upper window. When I saw it was really she, I went down and let her in myself; and the first glimpse I got of her face sent a thrill of relief and hope through my whole being; for its expression showed no mark either of worry or of fear for my safety.

“From her account of the course affairs had taken at the settlement subsequent to my flight, it transpired that my vanquished enemy had been found, early on the morning after he was shot, by two timber men and brought home badly injured, but not dead after all, and on the day of her own departure he was considered out of danger, although he was delirious most of the time. In a lucid interval he had accused, not *me*, but *another man*, of twice attempting his murder because of a ‘fancied’ cheating by him in a card game. (I learned some time afterwards that it was this man, and not my rival, who had shot at me in the dark, mistaking me for the bully). What the woman told me lifted the double load of dread and anguish off my heart, since I had neither killed a fellow-man, nor was I being hunted as his assailant.

“I became almost gay, and did not sober

down again until my turn came to recount the details of my escape and my adventure with the baby and to explain my worry over the task of discovering its parents and getting it back into their hands promptly. This task was not so easily performed then as it might be to-day. I had only a general idea of the locality in which I had found it—enough, maybe, to have enabled me, by retracing my steps, to relocate it, but not clear enough to direct another searcher to it or to reach it by letter. And, besides, if the infant belonged in that particular camp, the log-drive had been started by this time, and the camp and all its denizens would be gone long before the babe, or even a courier, could be gotten there. The ownership of the timber land itself might give no safe clue, since much of the tree-cutting in that wild country was really done then by timber thieves. It was impractical to take the child along on a personally-conducted search, and the wisest course seemed to be to mail a letter giving all known particulars of the case to the police authorities at Winnipeg and depend upon them to institute further necessary inquiries and searches.

“But this proceeding would necessitate my explaining a whole lot of things I didn’t want raked up—as to why I had not taken the child to the nearest camp at once, or at least left it

in official hands at Winnipeg; how I came to be in that ravine in the middle of a stormy night when I could have had shelter for the asking, etc. I would have gone back myself in the long run, but the woman on whose account I had got mixed up in my shooting scrape with the bully, would not hear of it, protesting that I should be deserting her and that she knew I would never come back to her if I went. Already she was jealous of the kid and disliked to see me fondle it. You know, mister, you can't reason with a woman like you can with a man;

'For if she will she will, you may depend on't,
And if she won't she won't, and there's an end on't';

as some old poet fellow once said.

"Well, nothing at all was done about the matter for another week or so, and I commenced to look about the town for some work to do, as I wanted to marry the woman. To be sure, I knew nothing about her past life or habits, but in the frontier towns—in such surroundings as those in which I had first met her, questions are seldom asked or answered in regard to one's previous degree of servitude, for fear of counter questions. She had me going, all right, with her flattery and 'goo-goo eyes,' and that was enough for a young rough-neck like me. One thing about her I had noticed, and commented on too, however—that

she always refused beer or liquor of any kind. I once asked her in a joking way, 'how long she had been on the water wagon,' and was startled by her sudden, emotional reply that, 'if I ever saw her drinking *once* I'd never want to see her again.' I did not take her outburst seriously at the moment, but it came back to me laden with meaning not long afterwards.

"Along in the third week after the coming of the woman to the cottage she went downtown one morning and did not return to supper, nor during the whole night. As she had a few old acquaintances of her own in both St. Paul and Minneapolis, we concluded she had stopped over night on a visit to some one of them, although she had taken nothing but her usual hand-bag along with her. But when she still did not come back after two days had passed by, I became really alarmed, as I was still in love with her, and started looking for her in the retail business portion of the city, where the most street cars stopped and the largest number of people could be met in the shortest time. Next day I went to Minneapolis, also, and patrolled all the principal downtown streets there between the river and Ninth street. Here I ran across a friend of my 'pal's' who had been introduced to her at our cottage, and he volunteered the information that he was

pretty sure he had seen her near the Nicollet Hotel, then the leading hostelry of the city—just before the then new West Hotel was erected.

“So I stayed over in Minneapolis that night and continued next morning my walking and watching with an increasing suspicion of something being wrong with her. At about seven o'clock that evening my vigilance was rewarded by my catching sight of her back as she was entering the stairway of a doubtful-looking transient rooming, or bed-house, on Washington avenue—a little ways south of Nicollet avenue.

“I suppose you know the locality, sir(!)—No? Well, it's not a very savory one even *now*, but *then* it was a pretty bum neighborhood, I can tell you.

“I ran after her, and reached the entrance of the bed-house so promptly that I saw her pass from the head of its street stairs to a room half way down the hall. Without hesitation, I went up and knocked at her door. She opened it, looked at me in a dazed way and then, appearing to recognize me suddenly, threw her arms around my neck, crying out in a maudlin voice: ‘Blesh hish little heart! Did he come to shee hish mommer!’ She was dead drunk!

“I was too thunderstruck and mortified to

answer at once, and all my pent-up anxiety for her began to turn to loathing. She motioned me to a chair at the window lighted by a dirty air-shaft, and proceeded, unabashed, to remove her skirt and shirt-waist, tearing the latter in her drunken awkwardness. Before I realized what she was doing, she had dropped the single, soiled, cotton underskirt she wore, to the floor and unhooked her corset and thrown it aside. She seemed to have forgotten entirely my presence in the room as she fell heavily on the bed and rolled over on her face in the instantaneous sleep of intoxication. The spell of my fascinated disgust then broke, and, as she moved her body into an easier position, I tossed over her the faded 'comfort' lying at the foot of the bed. She now lay flat on her back, with her mouth open and exhaling the fetid carbonic oxide of the common whiskey sot. A half emptied pint bottle of cheap whiskey lay under her pillow, and her lips were cracked and blackened, as if burnt by the liquor she had drunk or by some narcotic, poisonous 'dope.'

"I stood looking at her a few minutes, trying to concentrate my thoughts and decide upon some course of action; then I turned down low the single gas jet, threw open the window, and left the room to consult the frowsy, flat-breasted, landlady of the place. That beldame, when

she got it through her 'nut' that I was willing to become responsible for the payment of the woman's room rent, hailed me as her deliverer, but was loud in her protestations of the damage that was being done to her 'respectable house' by my 'lady friend's' shameless conduct in coming home in a disheveled and intoxicated condition for the past three nights and bringing strange men to drink in her room with her at all hours.

"Say; it was fierce! It broke me all up! I shut the old hag up by paying her a week's rent in advance for the miserable room, and ordered her not to let the woman go out again until I gave her permission. She took my orders as though I were the woman's kept lover—her 'strong-arm' partner. I went out to a laborers' restaurant in the same block and bought a two-dollar book of coupon meal tickets and left them at the 'hotel,' so the landlady could use them to send out for food for the woman, saying I would look in again next day.

"My dreams of love were completely shattered, but I could not decently desert my broken idol without stopping to pick up the pieces. What she had once said to me so vehemently about 'my never wanting to see her again if I *once* saw her drink,' now came back to me forcefully; yet I wanted to give her at least

a chance to explain in mitigation of her conduct and what led her into it. I had the conscientious feeling, too, that my responsibility to her could not end until I had sobered her up and left her able to take care of herself and keep out of the lock-up.—Then I would take myself off, and out of her life forever.

“I passed a restless night, going back there at noon the next day. Finding her still sleeping, I returned again at evening, but, on the landlady’s assertion that she knew better how to handle her than I did and her frank admission that she was in no shape to be seen, I still further deferred my self-promised talk with her. I had dropped a postal card to the cottage at St. Paul telling my friends I was detained in Minneapolis unexpectedly and they need feel no uneasiness over my continued absence for another day or two; but purposely withheld from them any news of my deplorable discoveries about the woman. Not till three o’clock of the second afternoon did I get an opportunity of seeing and conversing with that wretched derelict, my former lover.

“The atmosphere of the mean, diminutive, court bed-room she occupied, was stale and musty, there was a dirty tray of half-consumed food on the bureau, the bed had not been remade, and a general air of wretchedness per-

vaded the whole room. The woman herself looked up inquiringly at me upon my entrance, but said nothing. An awkward silence was at length broken by my polite inquiries as to her physical well-being, and our conversation once begun, we talked on for an hour.

“Of her own notion she told me sufficient of her personal history to acquaint me with the fact that she was subject to intermittent relapses into her present degree of irresponsibility; and while I experienced some compassion for one who evidently had not the will-power to resist such appetites, I was not a fool; and I informed her flatly that if she did not give up such degrading habits at once and permanently, I should quit her altogether.

“She pleaded with me at first, but finding me determined and obdurate in my decision, grew angry, and we quarreled. When I saw that she was becoming hysterical I excused myself and left her uncereemoniously. She pursued me to the head of the stairs with incoherent screams and ribald oaths, calling me a fugitive from justice—a murderer, and swearing she would ‘get even’ with me.

“Outside on the street I drew breath more freely, congratulating myself on having found her out in time. It is a mercy that such women fail to appreciate the repelling force of their

depravity upon the ordinary person of the opposite sex—that their illogical minds become deadened to the repulsiveness of their own persons, and they do not realize the awfulness of their self-inflicted punishment.

“When I got back to St. Paul I could see nothing to be gained by relating my sad experience to my friends at the little cottage home, and I shrank, with untutored decency and wounded pride, from deliberately injuring her standing with them by assailing her moral character. All I desired was to be quit of her forever, and I did not think she would have the nerve to come back to the cottage after what had passed between us. That showed I did not *understand* women! I obtained temporary employment in a St. Paul warehouse, through the intercession of my friend while I was away, and things quieted down for a week. Then the unexpected again happened.

“I remember it was on another Saturday evening that as I approached the cottage my friend and his wife appeared at the door with horror and consternation written on their faces, and beckoned me to hurry towards them. The wife informed me, in tearful, excited words that the *woman* had returned to the cottage that morning, a little after I had departed for my work at the warehouse, and, volunteering some

plausible explanation of her long absence, had gone to her former bed-room to lie down. Later in the day she had helped to prepare luncheon, and then offered to watch the child, who was delighted to see her again in spite of her previous indifference to him, while her hostess went down-town on a short shopping tour, from which she had been kept before by the necessity of looking after the child. When she—the hostess, returned, two hours afterwards, the woman was *gone*, bag and baggage, and the child could not be found. She was ‘frightened to death!’ she said, and ran about the near-by vicinity asking all her neighbors if they had seen either of the missing ones. Finally a small boy in the block remembered he had observed a cab drive up to the cottage and take on a lady and child with baggage, as if for a journey.

“Immediately it flashed upon me that this was the woman’s method of ‘getting even with me’ for my righteous desertion of her, which she had evidently taken bitterly to heart. Like a woman, she took pleasure in a double revenge, hoping by her unique plan to injure both myself and the child. Supper was forgotten and we all three set out at once for the different railway stations, to try and head her off in her cruel design. I stopped on my way at the central police station and enlisted municipal aid.

For two days and nights we did little else but hunt for the absentees, but our efforts were unrewarded by even a clew to them. I was deeply grieved as well as sadly worried, because I had learned to love the boy, and the thought that now I could not return him to his father and mother nearly made me ill.

“At the end of the week the police department of St. Paul reported to us that the chief of police of Milwaukee had just written saying that a woman and baby answering to the description wired him from St. Paul, had been seen in his city and he was now trying to locate them definitely. I had had to give up my job anyhow, as I was no good to any one with this depressing and upsetting burden on my mind, and now I packed up and took the first train for the German City by the Lake.

“When I got there the police had nothing further to report in regard to the kidnaper and her victim, and for several days I joined their local sleuths in their chase. Those were the bitterest hours of my life, bitter as that life has been, for the most part, since.

“One bright morning as I was walking alone and dejected on Grand avenue a couple of blocks west of the old Plankinton House, I was attracted to a crowd gathering on the sidewalk near the Sixth avenue intersection and heard

the gong of a hurrying police-patrol wagon. Skirting the edge of the crowd, I asked what the trouble was, and learned that a woman had fainted and was lying there on the walk. Pushing through the mob as the officers parted it, I got close up to the prostrate figure. I reeled with surprise and shock—it was the form of the woman I sought. A passing doctor was working over her, and as he straightened up from his stooping position I stepped forward tremulously, saying I knew the patient and asking him for the result of his examination. Laconically, he answered, ‘Instantaneous death from heart disease; probable immediate cause, dissipation. Better have her removed to an undertaker’s. It’s all over!’

“So, those lips from which, alone, I could hope to learn the whereabouts of the child or its fate, were sealed forever without imparting their secret. This was ‘getting even’ with a vengeance beyond the woman’s boldest calculations. The body was taken to an undertaking establishment by the police, and I accompanied it. Knowing no address of any relative of the dead woman, I myself arranged to have her buried in a small cemetery in Milwaukee, and ordered a simple headstone with just her name and the date of her decease on it, to be set up over the grave. I took receipts from the under-

taker, the monument house and the cemetery company in my own name, leaving the latter concern my St. Paul friends' address, so I could turn over the receipts to anyone who might later come forward and claim her body.—I have them yet. About forty dollars in money was found in her clothes, and this I used towards defraying the expense of her burial.

“The search for the child was now taken up again with additional incentive and renewed energy; advertisements were inserted in all of the city's daily papers offering one hundred dollars reward for information leading to the discovery of the baby, living or dead; asylums and hospitals were thoroughly searched, and a house to house canvass made. It was all useless. At last, totally discouraged and nearly penniless, I gave up all present hopes of finding the poor baby, and dreading to go back to the scene of my misfortune in St. Paul, came on to Chicago to drink and forget!

“Since that time I have wandered through all the larger American cities, drifting aimlessly from place to place—sometimes flush of money, more often as you see me now. But though subconsciously I have always been on the look-out for the face of the lost baby as I last saw and remembered it, I have never, to this day, seen or heard of the child again. I do not

believe the woman could have had the nerve, or sufficient hatred, to make away with the infant; nor, bad as she was, do I think she was cruel enough to have disposed of it where it would be harshly treated, simply out of spite for me; but I can only hope, and try to persuade myself, that it fell into good hands. It is the one pure dream of my worthless life that in some way, before I die, I may be assured of its being alive and that its existence has not been a wicked or unhappy one. Then, if the still greater boon of bringing the boy, now grown to manhood, together with his own, real parents again, might be granted me, I could die self-absolved and content."

It was quite late when his *vis a vis* at the restaurant table concluded, in a breaking voice, his singular story. And John, who was the more strongly moved by it through his long brooding over his own unraveled early history, suggested that they postpone consideration of the arrangements he intended making for his assistance till another meeting. He took the man back to his lodgings and went his own homeward way in a thoughtful and speculative mood. Several days after this he secured him a position as night watchman in the machine shops of his own concern. He found him to be both loyal and thankful, attending to his few

duties promptly and faithfully, and felt well repaid for his efforts in helping him to make a man of himself. He did this not knowing, however, that in taking this outcast in he "entertained an angel unawares."

CHAPTER XVII.

OSTRACISED

"Laugh and the world laughs with you;
Weep, and you weep alone."



DURING the four years of John's absence at Yale Gretchen remained in much the same social circles as before. She had not sought entrance into new and more fashionable "crowds" of young people, she being satisfied with the old ones. She entered no girls' "finishing school" or college after her graduation from the "Central High," and so was not affected by the caddishness of the sororities nor "taken up" by eastern debutantes and taught the vulgar power of moneyed arrogance in society. When John came home to stay, however, and especially after he became established in business, she accepted invitations into larger and more exclusive fields of social activity, as John was there to escort her; and her invitations were generally extended to include him as her nearest man friend.

Both Mr. Hummelmueller and Stubbs Senior had grown in prosperity and business importance with the passing years. The brewery of

the former had now an extensive shipping and export trade, as well as a greatly increased local output; while Stubbs Senior had outgrown his "independent" market and become interested in a large beef and pork packing plant at the Chicago Union Stock Yards.

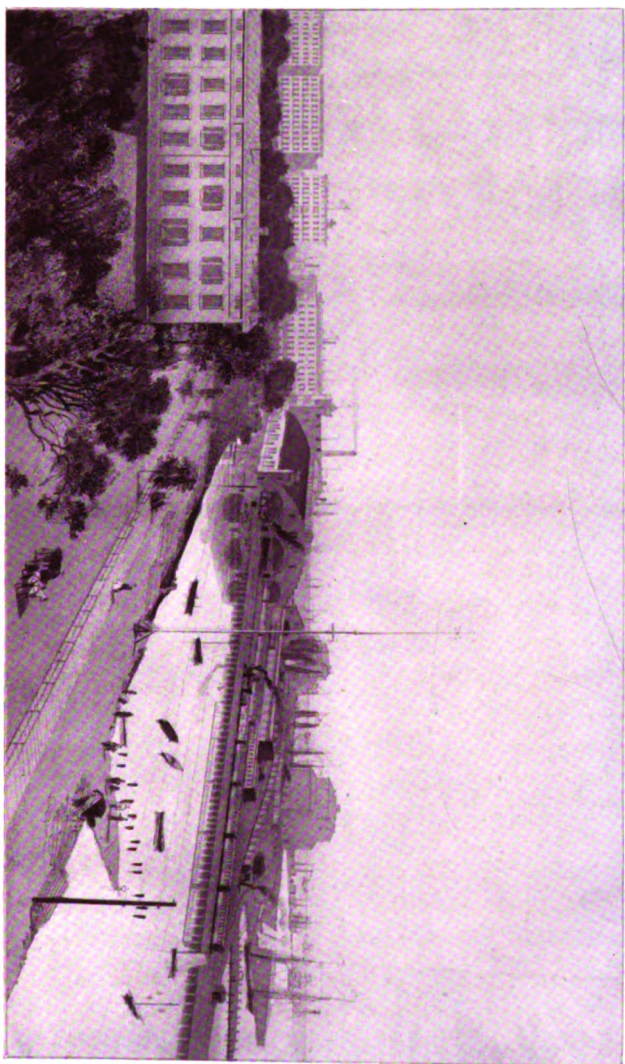
Brewers and pork packers, who had been rather "tabooed" as men of low and revolting occupations, in local society in Chicago's earlier palmy days of more Puritanical selection; were now become the socially-elect as heads of great corporations; and so the Hummelmuellers and Stubbses and their ilk, who once performed their own manual labor and asked social favors of no one, were beginning to meet at many of the functions of the most exclusive "sets" of the city.

Most of the "old families" which originally gave tone to the close-in boulevards and avenues of the "West Side" of Chicago (notably Ashland and Washington boulevards), had by this time removed to the "South" or "North Side," or even into suburban "country homes" along the "North Shore" of Lake Michigan, and, to some extent, into the farther suburbs to the west of the city—to avoid the encroachments of the ever-prolific poor. The Hummelmuellers and a few others whose business places were still located on the West side, held to their old

homesteads tenaciously (as a few of them do even to this day). But the Stubbses, now doing business at the Union Stock Yards, had moved into a brand-new Queen Anne residence in the Kenwood district (still the finest home district of the South side). Here young Bill Stubbs became a more insufferable snob than ever, and was, perhaps, more highly appreciated by his new associates, who took him seriously for what he pretended to be, than ever he had been by his former youthful companions, who knew him for what he was.

Thus John and Gretchen were frequently invited to formal dinners and dances and "dinner-dances" in the South and North side avenues; and there they met occasionally young Stubbs.

That more exclusive form of social preference evidenced by private dinners and luncheons and teas where plates are laid for scarcely a score at most, had not yet come into vogue in Chicago, and the "sets" were much fewer and larger than now.—Also, it was then considered good form for the entire family to sit out on the front steps in late afternoon and evening, in pleasant weather, receiving their callers there on bright carpets and cushions, instead of hiding away like sacred little "popes" upon whom it is not meet for the rabble to look, as is considered *en règle* there today.—Viewing the tw



VIEW TAKEN FROM THE CORNER OF MICHIGAN AVE. AND MADISON ST., CHICAGO, IN 1860, SHOWING LAKE FRONT AND BASIN, THE ORIGINAL CENTRAL STATION, AND ADAMS HOUSE ADJOINING

customs comparatively and with an unprejudicial mind, one is prompted to ask, "What's the difference?"

At these gatherings, as elsewhere, John had always been received and treated as a social equal, and even made much of as a rising young Yale graduate; but in the summer of the second year after his home-coming he began to notice a slight coldness and an increasing aloofness towards himself on the part of several "social lights" of more or less brilliancy, and the number of his invitations out grew less.

Abnormally sensitive to social criticism by reason of the melancholy induced in him by his unhappy racial situation, he became at first indignant over the implied ostracism; then somewhat distant and retiring in public. And, under all his reserve, he suffered keenly from this adverse regarding of him, which in many cases he naturally ascribed to those who did not really regard him adversely. One cannot always discriminate clearly between ill-will and ill-breeding. He said nothing to Gretchen about this new cross that was being laid upon his young shoulders; but she, herself, soon began to note the frequency with which her social solicitations from others, verbal or written, failed to include John; and she asked him if he could imagine a reason for it. Then he told

her what he thought; namely, that someone must be spreading insinuating reports about him in regard to his supposed racial connections.

She was deeply pained and resentful for him and proposed to decline all future requests for her presence which could be construed as purposely omitting him; but he pointed out to her the untenableness and the injustice to herself of such a stand, and induced her to do nothing about it for the time being. Meanwhile, by discreet queries and clever surmises, he undertook to find out just *what* was being gossiped about him and to trace it back to its original source of promulgation.

Eventually, he met, at one of the few gentlemen's clubs yet existing on the "West Side" of Chicago, a young wholesale sheet-iron man who was under considerable business obligations to him, and who took him confidentially aside and informed him that it had come to his personal knowledge that, about three months before, a Mr. William Stubbs who was much affected by the faster sets of young, unmarried people, had deliberately bruited abroad a story to the effect that he, John Manning, was "a bastard foundling, the illegitimate Negro son of a low white woman," and claimed he had the evidence to prove it.

Too polished and circumspect now to bully

John in his old, uncouth, open way, and more than ever aware of the latter's mental, moral and physical superiority over himself, this was, then, the underhanded mode of Bill Stubbs' new vicious, but covert, social assault on him in his pusillanimous desire of gratifying his personal, ancient spite and envy. And the pity of it was that there seemed no help for it—no way of openly disputing or disproving Stubbs' cruel assertions without widening the very publicity that, for Gretchen's sake, must be avoided. He could, without a doubt, call Stubbs to account, and privately punch his nose if he refused to retract his statements; but the mischief was already done, and, beyond that fact, if he really was a Negro, he had no desire to disown his race by a cowardly essay to foist himself upon the social life of a higher race through the fawning enactment of a lie.

That Stubbs should go so far in his low vindictiveness as to term him a "bastard" made John's blood boil in silent rage, and filled his heart with a murderous longing for revenge upon Stubbs that would have disturbed that worthy butcher's son mightily had he suspected its menace to his own sweet carcass. For neither Jim nor Jemima had ever breathed a word to John, or anyone else, of the damning

note found enclosed in the gold locket he wore the night he was left at their door.

Bill Stubbs, the implacable, like most would-be villains, overshot his mark, in spite of all his cunning, in asserting his ability to *prove* just *who* John was; for it soon dawned on his victim's mind that, as a bare possibility, Stubbs might accidentally have stumbled upon some genuine, traceable clew to the real history of his birth, so long a sealed book to him. He determined to put this hypothesis to the test. If it turned out to be well-founded and Stubbs' story to be true, why, the latter's attack upon his personality would have proved a blessing in disguise, and, while not exactly a boomerang to Stubbs himself, it would have served John in a way so near to his heart as almost to make him forget and forgive the wrong intended.

This set John to thinking out how to acquire the details of the so-claimed, special information in the easiest, surest and most non-committal way. In the course of a few days, he had elaborated a plan and began to carry it out. Attending such social affairs as still included him among their invited guests, and mixing with the other participants nonchalantly, as though nothing had occurred to distress him, he watched Stubbs closely wherever he ran across him, to ascertain who were his closest intimates, and so

most likely to be his confidants in his trouble-brewing for anyone he might happen to dislike. From among these he picked out a hot-tempered, bibulous youth who belonged to the same club as did Stubbs himself—the club in which he had been told by the iron-monger of Stubbs' scandalous utterances. Then he conspired with this friend to have the latter start a discussion at the club with Stubbs' bibulous satellite some night when all three of them were there and the "satellite" was following a "wobbly" orbit. In this discussion John's friend was to take exception to Stubbs' dissemination of the scandal, and offer to bet the bibulous one a hundred dollars that Stubbs' story about John's birth and parentage, was either a canard or a deliberate, premeditated lie, trusting to the cupidity of the youth's prompting him to take the whole matter direct to Stubbs himself. This would compel that vain-glorious cad either to back up his rash assertions with proof positive or to let his chum in for the loss of his bet. Another member of the club who was friendly to John, had volunteered to be idling within ear-shot and to "butt in" at the psychological moment, so that John might secure at least two witnesses to the result of the manoeuvre. John gladly provided the money to cover the proposed wager, as he

was perfectly willing to lose that amount if Stubbs' proofs threw any real light upon this, the greatest question of his life.

The propitious occasion finally came, and the simple ruse worked like a charm, John's chief coadjutor in the scheme laying just enough stress upon his insinuations that Stubbs had lied, to insure its prompt repetition verbatim to Stubbs, with the probable effects of enraging that doughty destroyer of character into naming his informant, if any, in justification of his dirty tactics.

Stubbs at first stood on his dignity and, while he swore he had plenty of evidence to prove all he had stated about John, declined to "lower himself" to the necessity of proving anything to anybody who "doubted his word as a gentleman." Howbeit, this did not suit his chum, who angrily reminded him that unless he did prove his case, the former stood to lose not only his own one hundred dollars but the other hundred he hoped to win. The upshot of the whole matter was that Stubbs, driven into a corner, reluctantly agreed to bring to the club-rooms on the succeeding evening a certain wholesale delivery wagon driver for his father's stock-yards concern. This man, he claimed, was the identical person who brought John to "Goose Island" and left him at the

Mannings' cottage. The two parties to the wager put the two hundred dollars, by mutual consent, in an envelope and deposited it in the club's safe. Then they had a "night-cap" all around and dispersed.

After hearing his friend's report next morning, John passed a restless day, torn between hopes and misgivings, and that night he lay awake in the mental anguish of one who feels the crisis of his existence approaching and fears its revelations. His foster-parents were unaware of any measures he had adopted to open up the secret of his past. John did not want to disturb their honestly-won happiness and equanimity with doubts and fears of his own which might, after all, turn out groundless. To them, though not to him, the question of his birth had long been a closed incident, and the reopening of which must necessarily wound their loving hearts now so strongly anchored in the belief of their sole right to his filial affections. Gretchen knew, in a general way, that inquiries were on foot, but trusted John to disclose to her in his own chosen time whatever it was right for her to know of his discoveries.

Morning dawned on a gray November sky, adding its outward gloom to the inward oppression that filled John now. He steeled his heart to meet undaunted whatever shock of dis-

closure must come with the unveiling of the past, and went resolutely to his office duties. At about eleven-thirty, when the suspense had become almost unendurable, his trusty co-conspirators called for him and the trio proceeded to a high-class down-town restaurant and catering establishment on Adams street, opposite the north front of the main post office. (This establishment, in those days the pride of the city, has long since been forgotten, its glory departed, its owner dead, and its specially constructed home demolished to make way for a sky-scraper.) Here they secured a table in one of its smaller private dining rooms upstairs. After their luncheon had been served and despatched, they dismissed the waiter with a liberal tip, and the momentous recital to John of the happenings and divulgings at the prearranged meeting at the club on the night before was begun. John watched the face of the speaker with magnetized closeness and growing emotion.

It appeared from it that Bill Stubbs had brought his informant to the club as agreed. This informant was a rough-looking customer with nervous eyes. He was obviously embarrassed by his unusual surroundings in the club-rooms and seemed to suspect that some trap was being set for him, though assured by Stubbs

that there was no intention on the part of any one to prosecute him for his connection with that affair of so many years ago. A couple of rounds of drinks revived his spirits and removed his suspicions, and after a third his tongue loosened and he even grew confidentially loquacious. Also, he produced old letters and memoranda and the names and addresses of witnesses still living in Chicago, which, when verified, would readily and quickly confirm and corroborate him in all his assertions and prove the truth of his informal deposition.

The gist of his story was, that some twenty-one years before, he had found himself stranded in Milwaukee, where he had been discharged from his position on a lake passenger boat, for drunkenness. That he could get no work there and was "stony-broke"—reduced, in fact, to foraging on the free lunch counters of the beer saloons so numerous in that German-speaking burg, and depending upon an occasional dime begged or wheedled from some passer-by for a bed in a 'hobo's' lodging-house. That, one day, as he sat loafing in his worn-out clothes on a hard bench in Juneau Park on the lake front, looking from its elevation down over the railway tracks to the boats loading and unloading at the piers, and speculating idly upon their probable destinations and the chances of stow-

ing himself away on one of them in the hope of being allowed to work his passage to some other, more hospitable city; a woman carrying a baby had come along and seated herself on the same bench, with a furtive glance at his forlorn appearance and negligent attitude.

She had spoken to him casually, and, pretending to be philanthropically inclined, encouraged him to unfold to her sympathetic ear his hard-luck story. At its conclusion she gave him a half-dollar, abstracting it from her purse ostentatiously and holding the purse open so that he could not fail to see that it was well lined with bills.

She soon said "good-bye" and started to walk away, but, curving back as if struck by a sudden idea, asked him if he would undertake a delicate mission if he were well paid for it. Being about desperate, anyway, and gratefully disposed towards her for her friendly gift—the glimpse she had given him of the thick wad of bills in her pocketbook acting, too, as a subjective lure to him—he had unhesitatingly answered in the affirmative.

Reseating herself close to him and lowering her voice, she had then told him, with an air of great mystery, that the baby she carried was a Negro; the fruit of a guilty liason of her own sister's, a woman of the middle classes, and

who had been betrayed by the father of the child, and then deserted by him when she told him she was *enceinte*. That the poor girl had given up all hopes of returning to her father's house in another Wisconsin City, as her family had disowned her on discovering her condition—and, starving and in despair of ever being able to hold up her head again, had become a "woman of the town." Hence she could no longer keep the child with her, and had made a passionate appeal by letter to her oldest sister to come and take it away. That *she*, who addressed him, was the oldest sister, and that, shamed by the coldness and uncharitable bitterness of the rest of the family, she had in a round-about way hunted up her erring youngest sister and promised her she would dispose of the unfortunate child as quietly and as advantageously to the infant itself as possible.

But nobody in Milwaukee seemed to want it, and her proposition to him now was to give him twenty-five dollars if he would take the baby to Chicago to get rid of it beyond trace or recovery in some out-of-the-way part of its less-known purlieus. He must not let it come to any harm while in his possession and must leave it neither at any public institution, nor at any home where he had reason to believe, from its general aspect, that the baby would be badly

treated if taken in and kept—as she wished it no harm, it being her own sister's child.

He had hesitated a little over accepting this commission as the hired instrument of the fate of a human being, with a superstitious dread of crossing the lines of predestination; but the “misplacing” of a “little nigger” more or less seemed less inculpatory than intentionally losing a real white baby. Mistaking the cause of his hesitation, she hastened to add that the baby was so light in color it would readily pass for a white child, and he wouldn't be questioned on the short ride between Milwaukee and Chicago, and that, as she trusted him to carry out his part of the “contract,” he must trust her as to the truth of her statement of the facts in the case.

Before he could formulate his objections she had thrust five five-dollar bills into his hand and held the baby out to him; and he had accepted both mechanically, as she walked off and left him to his own resources. Going to the south end of the park, he had boarded the first train out on the Chicago and Northwestern Railway. He had scarcely glanced at the child while in Milwaukee, but before his train entered Chicago he had already become unconsciously attached to it (it seemed to prefer him to the woman who had so carelessly given it up, and

to a perfect stranger), touched by its trustful clinging to him, and his heart revolted against the thought of making it the innocent victim of the woman's cold-blooded bargain with him. She had spoken without emotion, and he did not half believe her story of the child's parentage; but he was in no position to help himself, as he could not find her again if he wanted to; and he reasoned that if he did take the child back to such an unmotherly female, she would only employ some one else, more heartless than he was, to do her bidding. In his uncertainty he bethought himself that he might "hit two birds with one stone" by keeping control of the baby for a few days, in case the woman had lied to him, as he suspected, and its real parents should offer a reward for its recovery. So he had, on striking Chicago, hunted up a half-orphan asylum, where for a small weekly stipend the children of poor widows and widowers were cared for until their parents could reclaim them. He succeeded in convincing its matron that the child was his, and left it there, saying he would call and pay for its keep from week to week. He next secured employment at the Illinois Central Railway freight house near the mouth of the Chicago River. He was an illiterate and depended upon others for his newspaper information. He had some trouble getting hold of

any Milwaukee papers, but for a week went out of his way to find them.

Those whom he induced to look through them found no advertisement in them in regard to any lost child. After that he arranged with a German friend who took one or two of the Cream City's dailies regularly, to watch for such an advertisement, and gave up looking himself. A month later, when he had heard nothing from this friend, he hunted him up and asked him about it; only to be told that the latter had forgotten all about it after the first day or two. A couple of months passed in this way without his learning of any offered reward for the locating or return of the baby. Then came the cold weather of winter and in December he lost his job through a local, temporary strike of freight handlers on the Illinois Central, and found the expense of paying even the small amount necessary for the semi-public maintenance of the infant, an unwelcome burden.

Unwilling longer to assume the responsibility of its rearing and unable to keep up its support, and figuring in his own ignorant way that it would stand a better chance of final adoption by some substantial householder if left on his door steps during the heart-softening season of the Christmas holidays; he had, on Christmas eve, the poetic anniversary of the finding of

that other babe, the Christ-child, by the shepherds, in his lowly manger-bed, taken it away out to "Goose Island" and abandoned it there, at the door of a cottage which looked as though it might be occupied by thrifty and kind-hearted people. He had knocked on the door and run away; and going back an hour later to make sure of the baby's safety, he had been just in time to see a *white* woman come out and get the baby and run back into the house with it; and that was the last he had ever seen or heard of it until Stubbs had one day overheard him making some maudlin remarks, while under the influence of liquor, about a baby he once "owned" for a while and which he had given to a friend on "Goose Island." He had forgotten he ever made such a "break," but it seemed that Mr. Stubbs had been struck by the singularity of his remark (for an unmarried man) and its coincidence with the finding of John by the Mannings, and had, by threats of exposure, wormed the whole story out of him. The dates and the descriptions tallied fairly with what Stubbs knew of John's history, and the "providential" unearthing of this important evidence gave him the opportunity he had long sought in vain of injuring John's reputation, by spreading the story, garbled to suit his own ends. The driver had had no idea that

the house at which he left the foundling was occupied by Negroes, and was much put out when so informed by Stubbs.

Instead of going, like a man, to John's foster-parents and placing his accidentally acquired information at their disposal, to be used for John's possible benefit, Stubbs had tried to make capital out of it for his own revengeful purposes.

When his friend had concluded his account of the meeting and the wagon driver's tale, John sat silent and distraught, his eyes cast down, his hands trembling and his whole body shaking with an emotional chill. He was, at heart, eager to follow up this unanticipated clew to his parentage at once, as the story the woman had related to the wagon-driver about the child's being illegitimate, when coupled with her evident indifference to her own supposed relationship to it, appeared by no means conclusive to him. Yet, he felt shamed before his two friends, who might, with some show of reason, take for granted the stigma it placed upon his name.

Reading his thoughts by the light of their true friendship and respect for him, they called in the waiter and ordered a bottle of light wine to cheer John up, assuring him that they had little confidence in assertions coming from such a woman and would believe nothing detrimental

to his genealogy, unless it were established as a truth beyond all possible doubt.

They retendered him their personal services if he should need them to run down the evidence.

Relieved and heartened by their loyalty and desire to help him, John entered upon an hour's discussion with them of the case in all its bearings and details, and agreed to appoint another meeting between the three of them if, when he had decided what steps he desired to take in the matter, he found he needed their assistance. His head was in a dizzy whirl of new thoughts and conjectures as he walked back alone to his office, but before he reached it he became calmer and more sanguine, through an unreasoning, yet persisting, conviction that some good must come to him from his proposed investigations and search. And, even if his researches turned out unhappily for him, he must pursue them to the bitter end; for any solution whatsoever of this all-absorbing enigma—the mystery surrounding his birth and real parents, would be more endurable than his present state of demoralizing suspense.

CHAPTER XVIII.

VISITORS AND CONVERGING LINES

JIM and Jemima were still in blissful ignorance, both of Bill Stubbs' innuendos and of their later seeming verification. They naturally did not attend the "swell" functions of the higher white classes, and the rumor started by John's private enemy had not reached the common people around "Goose Island." As to what he had learned from the driver's story, John deemed it kinder to them and more satisfying to himself to keep it from his foster-parents' ears until he had further unraveled the tangled skein of his earlier existence and traced back its threads to their common origin—in the cherished desire of establishing at least the *legitimacy* of his birth. To Gretchen he simply said that he had come upon a warm clew through Stubbs' evil machinations, but did not wish to discuss it, even with her, until he had more favorable or fuller news to impart. She experienced some resentment at this, and was hurt by his implied lack of confidence in her sure loyalty to him under any circumstances of birth his careful process of inquiry might develop; but

she appreciated his extreme sensitiveness on that point and held her peace. She waited with a true woman's patience for the hour of trial for her love, if it must come, feeling inwardly that in the end he must succumb to her unswerving fealty, and marry her. About this time a new event transiently carried her thoughts into other channels.

Four days before the Christmas of this year, Gretchen, on her return home from a shopping expedition through the big down-town stores to select Yule-tide presents for others, was informed by the cook (it was the house-maid's day off) that some one had called up on the 'phone an hour earlier and asked for her, and would "ring her up" again at five. Ten minutes later the telephone bell rang and Gretchen took up the receiver.

"Hello! Hello! Is this No. —?"

"Yes; who do you want to talk with?"

"Miss Hummelmueller."

"This is Miss Hummelmueller on the wire now."

"Oh! is that you, Gretchen? Don't you know my voice? I am Mrs. Marotté, whom you met in Montreal two years ago."

"Why, how delightful! When did you arrive and where are you stopping?"

"I knew you would be glad to see me if I

let you know I was in Chicago. Mr. Marotté and I are at the Sherman House. We got in just this morning—on business, but are going to remain here over the Christmas holidays—if you can spare the time to show us the social menagerie of your “village” and will let us join your Christmas revels. Will you, dear?”

“You know, Mrs. Marotté, mother and I could have no greater pleasure. She’ll be awfully surprised, though. When may we call for you? You must make our house your home while you are here. We don’t live in a very attractive neighborhood, but the old house is a dear, old-fashioned place and I know you will enjoy it. Anyhow, you shall ‘go out’ all you want to—I’ll get invitations for you and your husband to all the best houses, for their holiday parties; and—

“My! my! child, you quite take my breath away! I’ll ask Francois if we’d better go to you—I’m sure we’d have a ‘scrumptuous’ time and I’d hate to spend Christmas all alone in a poky old hotel in this big city.”

“All right! Hurry up!”

“Hold the wire a minute—I hear Francois coming along the hall now—Hello! Gretchen, are you still on the wire?”

“Yes.”

“O, I say! Francois is as pleased as a boy

over your plans for us. If you can come for us at ten tomorrow morning, we'll be all packed and ready. It's awfully good of you, and I'm just dying to kiss you. Give my love to your mother."

"How lovely! Won't this be a Christmas to remember!—

"Did you bring your trunks? Yes? I'll telephone the express company to call at the hotel and get them in the morning, and I'll be there myself with mother and the carriage at ten sharp. Are you both well?"

"Fine! and you've made us very happy, too. Well, good-bye till tomorrow. We've brought you something nice for your Christmas present."

"Oh! I bet I'll just adore it!—what is it?"

"That's telling! You shan't see it till Christmas eve, you little minx!"

"I must run and tell the folks you're here—Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!—won't they be excited! I shan't be able to eat a bite till I see you—here's a kiss for you—can you hear it over the wire? Yes? What fun!—ha! ha! ha! ha!—good-bye!"

Preparations for the reception of their unexpected but doubly welcome visitors were hastened; and promptly at ten o'clock of the next morning Gretchen and her mother entered the

large, ground floor reception room at the hotel. Mrs. Marotté 'phoned down from their room that they were to go up at once, so their demonstrative reunion could have full license of privacy. The meeting between the four was a joyous one, free from all conventional restraint, and soon they were all on their way to the Hummelmueller home, talking so fast that the Marottés scarce noted the ugly and unromantic blocks along which they passed. "Papa" Hummelmueller welcomed them at the front door and at once fell in love with the striking-looking, polished-mannered, jovial Canadian couple. The Hummelmueller household still clung to the old-fashioned custom of serving dinner at noon, since the head of the family could so readily reach home from his brewery at that hour, and in half an hour hosts and guests were seated around the generously provided board. In the afternoon they drove through Humboldt, Garfield and Douglas Parks and along Washington and Ashland boulevards, the fat old carriage team of bays bringing them back in good season for an early supper.

* * * * *

John had gone to Milwaukee in pursuit of his inquiries into the identity of the woman whom Stubbs' informant claimed had asked him

to dispose of "her sister's baby," and he did not come back to Chicago for several days.

After diligent and exhaustive searching, he at length ran across a superannuated police sergeant there who recollected a case of assumed abduction which had been reported to the Milwaukee police department about twenty years back. But his impression was that the woman sought for as a kidnaper was found dead on the sidewalk near Grand avenue and Fifth street soon after.

Then, all at once, a great light broke on John's mind. He recalled the strange tale told to him by his own firm's present night watchman whom he had rescued from the slums, and the belief grew upon him that there might be a connection between it and the complemental story of the stock-yards driver. Quick thoughts, of alternating hopefulness and doubting, chased each other through his head, and his heart leaped within him as he perceived that here, perhaps, was the missing link that would belie that woman's base assertion of his illegitimacy, and lead him back along the true trail of his involuntary infantile wanderings, to his actual father and mother.

The police records of the particular case now under investigation by him, his action prompted by the old sergeant's dim, ambiguous recollec-

tions, were long since lost or destroyed, and nothing further could be learned in that city; so he caught the evening train to Chicago over the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, determined to "rout out" the watchman at once and compare notes with him on the two important stories. Arriving at the Union Station, at Canal and West Adams street, while the night was still youthful, he hurried to his machine shops and found the man he wanted on duty, as usual. The latter was surprised by John's appearance there at such an hour, and asked him in some confusion if anything had gone wrong. John merely shook his head and motioned for him to come with him into his private office. The man obeyed with a bewildered face, and sat down across the table-desk from his benefactor, waiting respectfully for him to explain the reason for his presence there and what he desired of him. Fixing his eyes upon the man with an anxious but reassuring look, John reminded him of the curious story he had once told him of his adventure with the bears up in Canada and the child he had rescued and taken away with him, only to have it stolen from him a month later. Then he said he had found out certain things which led him to think that this child was living and could now be located, and went on to relate the second baby episode. The

watchman's face lit up with repressed excitement and dawning relief as he gave ear to the retelling of this other incident, rivaling his own experience and supplementing it.

At its conclusion he asked if the driver had given anything like an accurate description of the woman's dress and manner and general effect, and how he had described the baby. It seems he had; and when these observations were detailed to him he jumped to his feet, exclaiming wildly:

"It was she—it was she, I know! I can remember that dress of hers distinctly. But we can do something more to prove that the child was the same one I took from the bear's lair, if the people who adopted him have kept the little clothes in which they found him; for you say the driver declared, that when he took the baby away from the orphanage, where it had worn the regulation uniform dress of the institution, he discovered they had redressed it in the original articles of clothing it wore when brought there, although it had largely outgrown them. Well, I would recognize those clothes at a glance! Besides, you must remember that the driver spoke also of a gold locket and chain he found about the baby's neck containing a written slip of paper which he could not read, but which the head matron of the half-orphan asy-

lum had, after reading, with some embarrassed hesitation replaced in the locket, telling him it gave no clew to the baby's parents. If he didn't make away with it, but left it on the child, that alone would identify the child as the same one I lost."

John's heart gave a great, exultant bound; for, in his later youth Jemima had often shown him those very tiny garments, which she meant always to keep sacredly. He could scarce restrain his wild desire to fly to his home with the tremendous good news. He raised his hands nervously to his eyes, to hide his glad tears—his almost agonized excess of delirious joy over the coming release from his long melancholy and shamed depression. He wanted to dance, to skip about, to laugh, to shout! Controlling himself heroically, he bade the overjoyed watchman telephone for one of the men of the day force to come at once to the shops and take his place for a couple of hours, so he could accompany John home and verify their hopeful assumptions by viewing the infantile "wardrobe," which John knew had been carefully preserved. Prayers of heart-purifying thanks arose to John's lips, and the blood surged through his veins at fever heat, his pulses racing with his thoughts. An hour subsequently they entered the cottage and surprised his foster-parents just

as they were starting to bed. They had not anticipated so sudden a return on John's part, and, their imaginations catching fire from the evident agitation of the two late-comers, were oppressed by visionary apprehensions.

John quieted their nameless fears, and told them, for the first time and in as few words as was consistent with a clear understanding of the whole affair, the insulting defamation of him Stubbs had spread about, what the substantiating of that report had led him to discover about his own infantile history, and what still further he surmised.

He begged Jemima to go and get the box containing his "foundling" wraps and clothing. They, the foster-parents, sat speechless, half dazed by confusing doubts and memories. Rousing herself with difficulty from her trance-like absorption, Jemima went to get the precious box. The instant she had unwrapped its outside paper and removed the cover of the box, John's companion clutched in both hands the first garment disclosed and held it out at arm's length before him. One look satisfied him, and putting it humbly to his lips, he faced the family and cried out in shaking tones:

"My God! They are the identical clothes in which I first found him! What wonderful luck! He had other clothes we bought for him

in Minneapolis; but—don't you see?—*these* will enable his *real parents*, as well as myself, to identify him! And, too, even after twenty years! Thank God! thank God! It seems to lift the weight of years from off my heart and conscience! And to think that this baby of mine was *you*, *John Manning*, who so befriended me when I was like a dog in the gutter, with every human foot raised against me and itching to kick me down! And that when I told you the story of my wonderful experience I was actually sitting face to face with the very child I had so long sought and I never suspected or dreamed it! It is stranger than any fiction I ever read! Who could have foreseen that the bread I cast in my humble way upon the water, would be returned to me so nobly magnified after all these years? My heart is very full tonight. After this miracle of Providence I shall never despair again!"

John seized the man's hand firmly in silent comprehension of the other wondrous reward his own inspired act of simple, natural charity to this fellow-being had brought so indirectly to himself; and he there resolved that now, more than ever, *he* would never forget to help those whom the cold and cruel world of men forgot.

After the watchman had gone back to his work, forgetting in his excitement and his cer-

tainty of identification of the baby's clothes, all about the locket and chain, Jemima came and put her arms around John's neck and sobbed her perturbed heart out on his breast, while Jim turned away to hide his overpowering feelings.

"O John! John! John! my darling son! Do not think I don't rejoice with you in your so-longed-for discovery of the key to your true identity," wept Jemima; "but, oh! it will break my heart to lose you to another, even if that other be the woman of whose own body you were once a part. For you have been as much my son to me as the strongest ties of blood could ever have made you—and you are all we have—'our one ewe lamb!'"

John gently lifted her face to his own and kissed her, keeping one arm about her.

"Don't say that, mother. You know I shall always love and revere both you and my foster-father, even if I do find other parents awaiting my coming. They, perhaps, may have passed in want and sorrow the long years you two and I have spent in love and happiness; and your own hearts are too large, too tender, to wish to deny them now a little of that sweet, mutual solace with which we three have, by God's mercy, so long been blessed. I cannot and will not deny my own blood, but my heart

can hold your love with theirs. Remember, too, that I may never find them, or find them but to find them dead, the only consolation left to me, their memories and their graves. Be comforted, parents mine, and it may yet be well with all of us."

They became quieter and Jemima, upon a sudden thought, went into her bedroom and brought out the little locket worn by John when he was first brought to them. As she now opened it, out fell the narrow slip of paper on which was written the cruelly bitter message she had kept hidden from everyone but her husband.

John stooped and picked it up, and read thereon the fearful curse it strove to put upon him. His eyes blazed, the hot blood lashed his forehead, his hand clenched, crushing the vile paper; but he compressed his lips tightly over the passionate invectives that welled from his heart. Handing it back reluctantly to his foster-mother, he said:

"Now that we know it is a horrible, inhuman lie, I can try to forget if not forgive it; but if I believed that the woman who *bore* me ever voluntarily wrote it, I should never seek her, nor forgive her.

"You have taught me so well what a true

mother can be, that I should simply abhor and shun her!

“Ah! to think, mother, that all this time you and father *knew* of this fatal blemish supposed to rest upon my name and yet were too kind—too noble—to breathe a word of it to me or others! God bless you! How strong must be your love for me!”

He buried his face in his hands and wept uncontrolled with great, tearing sobs that shook him to his very soul. The scenes and emotional feelings through which he had lately moved, a leading actor, in such quick succession, had broken down the barrier of his long years of mental and heart-wearying isolation, and his unnatural reserve was swept away forever. He had become a child again, and could believe—his doubts and darkness fled.

Growing calmer, the three talked on of many things, but principally of the measures best to be taken in a renewed attempt to discover, living or dead, the lost parents. For the Mannings did not hesitate for a second in declaring this the one great thing to be considered. It was one o'clock in the morning before a feasible plan was settled upon, which, though it might be far-fetched and uncertain of result, appeared to be about the surest and most practical method of procedure. This plan was, for

John to despatch the watchman who had taken him from the bear's den, back over the route by which he had come on his memorable flight into the United States, with abundant funds and instructions to start out as nearly as possible from the place where he had found the child, and follow the river down its course, asking of loggers and townspeople and the local authorities as he went, the information he sought, and following up to wherever it led, any slightest clew they could give him. When he should have gathered enough evidence to warrant his sending for him, John was to go on himself and take charge of the "chase" personally.

John was well aware that this man would willingly brave any hardship to serve him, and that he had never ceased to regret his own inability to restore him to his parents, from whom, in a manner, he had taken him; and after the first of the year he could be spared from the shops for a while readily enough, as a portion of the day force was to be temporarily laid off on account of changes to be made in the plant and one of these men would be glad of the chance to take his place on the night watch.

After he went to bed that night (in the little room that had been built onto the cottage for

his especial use), John lay awake for many minutes trying to realize what all these new revelations meant to him. How, if everything turned out as he hoped, it would remove all obstacles in the way of his marriage with Gretchen—how it would give to him those rights and ties of blood over the lack of which he had so long and sadly brooded—how it would, in all likelihood, absolve him forever from that nightmare of his waking days, the unchangeable curse of color—how he was now born anew unto all the joys of a new-found world of unalloyed happiness. He dropped asleep at last to dream of hunting for hours, through impenetrable Canadian forests and along icy, turbulent streams, elusive shapes that turned and smiled at him, only to utterly and inevitably disappear as he rushed towards them with outstretched arms, crying:

“Father! Mother! Wait for me! It is I!”
and fell down weeping and despairing in the cold, deep snow.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE DÉNOUEMENT

WHILE John was thus making new history for himself and those he loved, in uncovering the long buried knowledge of his own origin, Gretchen and her mother and father, all unaware of the important and prophetic happenings and developments that were to affect so materially their future lives and happiness, were busily entertaining their guests, who entered with zestful enthusiasm into all their plans for them. The first two evenings they spent with them at holiday parties on the South side, where introductions to the Marottés were much in demand and the visitors began to get that intimate insight into the lives of a city's residents which no sojourn in any hotel can ever give one.

One may travel, as the writer has done, over all Europe and North America, and if he stops only at high-priced hotels, he will come home with little or no real knowledge of the habits and usages, joys and sorrows, of the people indigenous to those countries through which he hurries; for life in the best—the principal—hotels is much the same the world over.

On the afternoon of the day before Christmas Mrs. Marotté sat with Gretchen in the latter's combined dressing and bedroom while the young girl, who had just bathed, was laying out and donning her evening clothes. Even a woman must *sometimes* acknowledge the extreme, wildly-attractive beauty and charm of some other creature of her own sex, and Mrs. Marotté was almost startled by the perfection of Gretchen's form, disclosed by her negligée—the delicious, cool curvings of her arms and shoulders, the tawny, creamy clearness of her skin, the blossoming voluptuousness of her limbs and bosoms.

As the girl slipped on a dainty dressing gown of pale blue, ruffled-edged chiffon laid over a soft lining of French-gray silk, her friend called to her to come and sit beside her on the antique, high-backed sofa, saying she wished to talk seriously with her.

Gretchen complied with a laughing smile and, leaning back gracefully with one bare arm thrown carelessly over the high end of the old Colonial settee, her nether limbs crossed comfortably and showing her shapely, tapering bare ankles and her perfect, unmarred feet enclosed in low lounging slippers, she prepared to listen to the "serious talk" of her beloved guest.

With becoming diffidence Mrs. Marotté commenced:

"Gretchen, dear, you have never told me anything about your little love affairs, such as most girls of your age are generally eager to confide to their close, bosom friends. Have you no beaux or lovers?"

Gretchen blushed, and was still for a moment. Thinking she might have offended her, the elder woman hastened to speak again, in apology of her directness. But Gretchen held up one pink-palmed hand in mild protest.

"I understand you perfectly, Mrs. Marotté—it was a natural inquiry on your part, but my situation in regard to such matters is so peculiar that I hesitate to speak of it to anyone at all. I believe, nevertheless, that now, since *you* have asked me this question, I will tell you all about it, as I have such genuine confidence in your good heart and wise judgment that you may even be of help to me in deciding my action in relation to certain things I have been unable to bring myself either to do, or to leave undone eventually.

"Yes, my dear, *I have* a 'beau,' as you call him, whom I dearly love and who, I am sure, adores me. We have been playmates, companions and lovers from our earliest childhood days and are perfectly congenial and adapted

to each other. *But* there is a serious drawback (at least it seems so to him) that prevents our closer union. *I* would overlook this in a minute, but he is too proud and self-sacrificing to let me do so; and I am too fond of him to force him into doing anything he might afterwards regret in bitterness of spirit.

“Do you know, I sometimes think that the stubbornness of a rare and high nobility is harder to overcome than that of pure selfishness?”

Mrs. Marotté, deeply impressed by the dignity and pathos of her changed manner, asked quickly:

“What impediment can there be that could possibly cause him to hesitate in claiming *you—you* with the form of a goddess and the disposition of an angel? Why, I know men who have sold their souls for women with not one half your fascinations! He must be mad!”

“If he is,” countered Gretchen, “his is the madness of the soul—not of the mind. I can best explain *his* position to you, by telling you the story of his life. It is a most pathetic and noble one, and your own kind heart will bleed for him before I have done with it.”

Mrs. Marotté took one of Gretchen’s soft hands in her own and held it caressingly while she hung with close attention upon her words.

Gretchen's face paled, and her lips opened and closed tremulously, but then grew firm as she resumed:

"Exactly twenty-one years ago today," she began, "a foundling was left and discovered at the foot of the front steps of a little cottage not two blocks from this house. The childless man and wife who lived there, considered it a blessing sent to them by God on the very anniversary of that day on which he had sent his own Son to bless the world, two thousand years before. They were filled with happiness and glory, and kept him (for it was a boy), and they named him John.

"The child thrived, and grew up strong, obedient and lovely to look upon; and I came to know him well. He was legally adopted by his foster-parents, who were in moderate circumstances, but thrifty, and owned the cottage in which they lived.

"He and I attended the same school and always played together. We graduated from common school at the same time, and again were classmates and again graduated together from high-school, and *he* was the valedictorian of our class.

"One day there was a terrible fire here on the 'Island,' devastating many acres of stored lumber, and I, who had been playing with other

children among the lumber-piles, was deserted by the rest in their fright, at the first alarm, and, becoming confused in the labyrinths of boards and timbers, was caught and hemmed in by the flames, and there, all alone, faced death in its most frightful form.

“Thousands were pressing to my rescue, but none could reach me. I stood upon a high, hollow square of flaming timbers and watched their fruitless efforts, shouting and waving my dress-sash to direct their way to me. When I saw, as I thought, that all was over for *me*, I fell to the ground inside the square and fainted away.

“Then *that boy* came to me through the red-hot blasts of a living hell upon the wings of his unconquerable love for me, and carried me upon his shoulders, up ten feet against the burning boards and down the outer side of the square, which fell in a fiery crash as we struck the ground. He dragged me a hundred feet and into a miniature tunnel known to but a few of us—once built in play by ourselves and our young playmates and long ago forgotten.

“I stayed with him, perforce, in that narrow haven, with the hellish flames licking at its entrances, all through that night, and there I learned how much I loved him. We walked out hand-in-hand next morning, practically un-

scathed, from that blackened pyre, like resurrected spirits from the grave.

“Our lives went on as before and I was happy; but the boy’s whole existence was embittered by a certain disability (*he* named it ‘curse’) which I, myself, ignored, but which continued to prey upon his mind until I sometimes feared for his reason.

“He at first declined to accept the ten thousand dollars reward my dear father had offered for my seemingly impossible rescue, saying that ‘what he had done he would never have done for *money*’; but upon the reluctant acquiescence of his foster-parents in its acceptance and the insistent and almost tearful entreaties of both my father and mother, and myself, he finally, though unwillingly, consented to allow it to be invested for his benefit, in order that he might gain his heart’s desire of entering and finishing Yale University through his careful use of the income from it added to what his foster-parents could spare him.

“The boy passed the entrance examinations without conditions and was matriculated into Yale, and four years later graduated from that great university with honors. He returned to Chicago, and, putting on overalls, went into a machine shop and worked his way up from the bottom of the ladder to a secretaryship in the

company in two short years. He then became one of the three controlling stockholders of the owning corporation into which the concern was organized at his suggestion, through the wise reinvestment of the ten thousand dollars principal of the fund held in trust for him by my father and his foster-father, in its stock, together with its accumulated increment and the savings from his own wages.

“He has constantly given his personal attention and charity, yet without seeking notoriety, to helping the fallen to rise again. He has never uttered an untruth nor feared another man.

“He is the noblest human creature I have ever met or can ever hope to meet— and *I love* him, and he loves me as man has seldom loved a woman—and yet, he says he *cannot* marry me.” Her voice trailed off in a tragic whisper.

“But, dear heart, *why* can he not?” interposed Mrs. Marotté in tantalized remonstrance.

“Ah! that is the pity, the tragedy of it—the soul-searing pathos of his story! It is because his foster-parents are *Negroes* and, while he is, to all appearances, as white as you or I, the burden and preponderance of what little evidence has yet been found is, that he, too, is black—or has the taint of Negro blood within his veins. In fact, certain unscrupulous, cold-

blooded and purse-proud persons have taken side with a former school-boy rival of his whom he once worsted in a personal encounter brought on by that rival's unbearable, continuous affronts and indignities. This enemy of his (and of mine; for he long persecuted me with his unwelcome attentions) now arrogantly and maliciously claims to have secured damning proof, not only of my lover's taint of color, but of his *illegitimacy* as well. And so the man I love is gradually becoming socially *ostracized* by those who are not fit to kiss his feet.

"Yet, I *know* that he is *not* a Negro. My woman's—my lover's—instinct tells me that it cannot be so. I know it by that same sixth sense that tells *you* your own long-departed son is still alive. And, too, in all the years of our close intimacy I have never observed the slightest indication of such a thing.

"But it is slowly breaking his great heart—this never-ending, hope-benumbing, joy-deferring, cruel suspense; and if that breaks, my own heart, too, must break!"

As Gretchen ceased speaking her voice rose into a tortured wail and she threw herself on her friend's breast in a torrent of convulsive sobbing and blinding tears—sobbing, sobbing, sobbing as though her heart indeed must break.

Mrs. Marotté, shocked and terrified at the

impossibility of this young girl's infatuation with a Negro of questionable birth, and by the wild abandon of the reaction of her pent-up misery, held her close and soothed her. She thought rapidly, pondering over what to say to her—how to advise her in justice to both herself and her noble-hearted, but doubly unfortunate lover. At last a dim light gleamed athwart her darker musings, and she asked quietly:

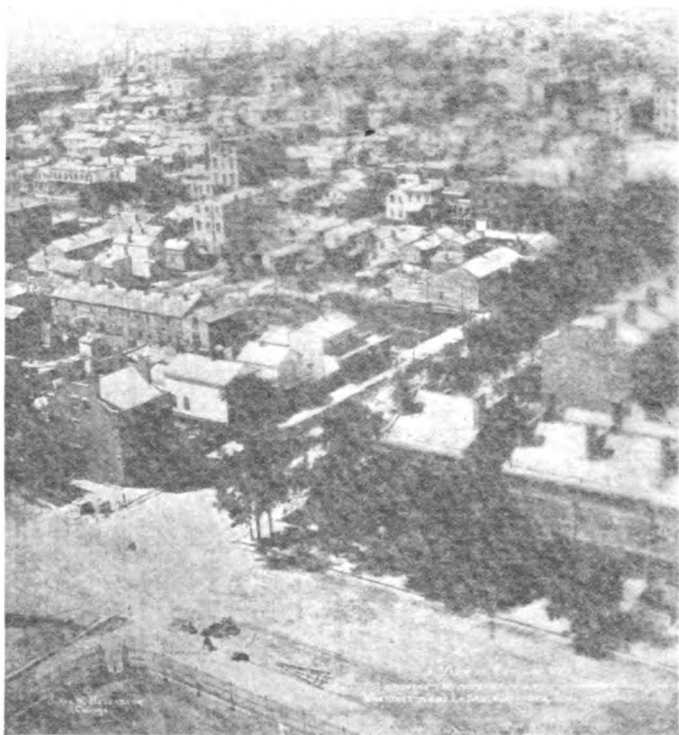
“Cannot I meet this young man you love while I am here? I could never disregard him after all you have told me, but if I might see and talk with him without his being aware that I was in your confidence—as a mere traveling acquaintance of your’s and your mother’s—I feel that something will come of it that will help you both, perhaps more than even I can imagine at this moment.”

“O, yes! you must be sure to meet him now. He will be back from Milwaukee, where he has gone to trace a strong clew to the real circumstances of his birth and parentage, for Christmas, and he and his foster-parents, the Mannings, will be at our Christmas party tomorrow night. But do, please, be very careful not to disclose to him by any slightest word or unthinking action that I have been so frank with you in regard to our peculiar mutual relations.

“He is highly sensitive to the impression he makes on other persons, because of that sense of personal disability which is ever uppermost in his own mind, and just now, I fear, this susceptibility is aggravated by his anticipation of the probably unfavorable results of his present looking up of the base calumny put in circulation by that enemy of ours of whom I have just told you. He has not informed me yet of his progress, and, for his own sake, I dread to ask him.”

Mrs. Marotté gave the implied promise, but requested that when the festive evening came Gretchen point out to her her lover from a little distance before introducing him, so she could study him unrestrictedly and without his knowledge for a few minutes. Gretchen now bathed her smarting eyes, and her friend dressed her and coiled her beautiful, heavy hair at the nape of her neck with deft fingers and admiring glances. And together they went down to join the rest of the two families at supper, just as the old-fashioned, turbaned darky cook rang the big, old-fashioned supper bell in the good, old-fashioned way.

The Hummelmuellers had fixed upon Christmas night instead of Christmas eve, as the date of their old-fashioned “home-party,” with its giant Christmas tree laden with presents and all



**VIEW TAKEN FROM CHICAGO COURT HOUSE, IN 1859, LOOKING
SOUTHWEST AND SHOWING THE CORNER OF LA SALLE
AND WASHINGTON STREETS**

the rooms festooned and strung with evergreens and bright with flowers and wide, deep-red ribbons. Their southern darky mammy was in all her glory as *chef* to the occasion, bossing about with professional superciliousness the white neighbors who came to help prepare the great annual feast of plenty. She was so funny that they forgot to kick, and did just as she directed, that tomorrow "everything might be lovely and the goose hang high." The hospitable Hummelmuellers had not seen John since his return from Milwaukee the day before, and they looked forward with inquisitive longing to his arrival with his foster-father and mother on the occasion of this, their principal holiday event. More particularly so in view of the double significance the day held for them as being the anniversary of the coming of both Christ and John.

The Christmas dusk descended from the still, gray clouds; the air was brisk and keen; the snow lay deep, covering with its mantle of idealizing purity and loveliness the realism of all outwardly sordid, ugly things. Everything was in readiness at the old time-hallowed homestead. An indescribable atmosphere of peace, good-will and jovial mystery pervaded every room, for God and Love and Hope were there. The great evergreen behind the close-folded doors of the

library still reigned in lonely splendor, but the balance of the rooms were comfortably filled with neighbors and invited friends by half-past seven o'clock.

No attempt was made to receive them and introduce them through a "bawler-out" in the stiff, formal manner of modern social entertainments, as the guests were all mutual acquaintances. Mr. and Mrs. Hummelmüller moved about among them hospitably, giving each a cordial hand-shake and a genial word, while Gretchen chaperoned Mr. and Mrs. Marotté.

The floor of the long double parlor had been covered with canvas for the dancing and over in one corner of the hall, behind the wide staircase and screened by palms waving in the draft from the constantly opening and closing front door, six members of Johnny Hand's Immortal Band, without which no really swell Chicago reception or dinner-dance could be complete, discoursed its liveliest strains, interspersed with Christmas hymns and carols, the children accompanying the latter with their shrill, buoyant young voices.

About eight o'clock Mrs. Marotté stood talking with Gretchen at the rear end of the improvised dancing floor, where the recess of a bay window afforded a partial privacy. As the former looked up and across the bobbing heads

of the young people, John came to the hall doorway of the front parlor. He was alone. He remained standing there for a minute or two, letting his eyes wander over the assembled faces, seeking that of the "one girl in the world for him."

Suddenly Mrs. Marotté gasped and pressed with her hand her throbbing throat. She nudged Gretchen's elbow gently and whispered with catching breath:

"Quick, quick! Gretchen, who is that tall, dark young man at the parlor door?"

Then Gretchen saw him and started towards him involuntarily, but, remembering Mrs. Marotté's urgent request to point John out to her before introducing him, stepped back instead, behind a convenient palm, and answered her friend archly:

"Oh! I almost forgot our agreement. That is *John*, my 'little beau.' How strange that you should note him so quickly!"

The other woman did not reply, but stood rigid, staring with dilating eyes at John's approaching figure, just as though she saw a half familiar apparition. Gretchen's own eyes followed her friend's fascinated gaze, and her heart thumped to suffocation as she perceived upon her lover's face, not its usual expression of diffidence and melancholy, but the light of a great

joy. It was scarcely a minute before John discovered her retreat and came up to her with swift, eager, impatient steps. Giving but a glance and a slight bow of deference to her companion, he clasped both Gretchen's hands in his and looked long and deep down into her sparkling eyes, his whole soul speaking through his own, until Gretchen's neck and features were burnt crimson by the answering blushes of love. Happiness—nay, ecstasy, was emblazoned in undeniable letters on *his* every feature, and ere he spoke a word Gretchen cried out to him softly:

“Oh! John! my love! I read good news in your dear face! What is it? Tell me! You are so changed, so lovely, I cannot be misled about it.”

John raised her shaking hands to his lips and kissed them rapturously again and again, but no word came—only his lips dumbly but surely formed a wondrous “Yes!”

Tears of unutterable pride and love and glory transformed her awe-filled eyes to liquid gems. Recovering command of her emotions and remembering the friend beside her, she turned to her, and placing a hand affectionately upon Mrs. Marotté's arm, drew her towards John and introduced him. The older woman had watched them, pale and tense, dur-

ing their lovers' greeting, and as John came forward her eyes never left his face. There was a great dread—a great hunger in them.

"Mrs. Marotté, this is John Manning, of whom I have told you so many interesting things." "John, take Mrs. Marotté to a seat and tell her what a bold, bad girl I seem to one who really and truly knows me," she banteringly added.

John gave an arm to this new acquaintance reluctantly and with a remonstrant look at Gretchen, who skipped away to meet other guests, and conducted his charge to the nearest unoccupied chairs. He had heard Gretchen speak of her gratefully some time before, as her kindly chaperon at Montreal, and was predisposed to like her for Gretchen's sake; but, just like a man, he couldn't see why Gretchen should run off and leave him with this strange woman on his hands when he had so much he was dying to say to Gretchen herself at the moment. "Women were funny about such things," he thought.

Mrs. Marotté, who was evidently restraining her impatience to talk with him with the utmost difficulty, read his thoughts, and smiled to herself; but she waited to catch his eyes and hold them before giving speech to the amazing things that filled her mind. After a short in-

terval of small-talk, during which she still closely observed and scrutinized his slightest movement and peculiarity of manner, and unobtrusively surveyed him from head to foot and back again and tried to analyze the tones of his voice, she could contain herself no longer, and, without leading up to the subject in any way, asked him abruptly:

“Mr. Manning, pardon my freedom—I assure you I am actuated by no idle curiosity in asking you this—but has Miss Gretchen ever related to you the story I told her one night in Montreal?”

“No, Madam; I think not. I—I’m sure not,” replied he, perplexedly.

“Ah! Will you mind very much if I tell you myself, *now*? I will make it as short as I can, and I believe it will interest you strongly.”

Wrought upon by the suddenness and strangeness of her proposal, John could only falter, “Not at all, Mrs. Marotté; please let me hear it.”

Then hurriedly and briefly, in tones low but vibrating with contagious feeling, Mrs. Marotté outlined to him the substance of the anecdote concerning the loss of her only son so many years ago, which Gretchen had heard two years before, but had never thought to repeat to John.

As she proceeded, his face grew grave, his eyes expressed a wondering alertness. He waited, breathless, for the story's climax. At its conclusion, Mrs. Marotté, still drawing his charmed attention to herself, went on to tell him what Gretchen had detailed to her (in a confidence which she now felt called upon to abuse for a greater end) of his unknown parentage and early abandonment to the "tender mercies" of the world, and asked him pointedly what further discoveries in regard to his earlier life he had made during his just-ended journey, saying she knew he had not yet informed Gretchen of them, but that they must soon become public property and she begged him to enlighten herself now.

Wholly unnoted by the two in their keen engrossment, Mr. Marotté had stopped directly in front of them at this point in their conversation, waiting to be introduced to the good looking young man who seemed to be getting on so famously with his charming wife. But before he could address the latter, John began the rapid relation to Mrs. Marotté of an epitome of the two equally strange adventures which he had but yesterday pieced together into one bizarre fabric; and the older man stood there before them, entranced, spellbound, weighing the importance of every sentence. For his

wife had but that morning made plain to him the unique relations between Gretchen and a certain young man of mysterious antecedents, and whom he surmised to be no other than the one now telling such extraordinary things.

Mrs. Marotté's heart raced tumultuously; her breath came in painful, catching sighs, and a faintness, as if the truth were too great to grasp, oppressed her as John passed from one to the other of his two counter tales.

As he ended his final peroration with the complete dove-tailing union of the corresponding parts of the separate stories and the details of his almost hopeless but unbending determination to begin at once the renewed search for his own parents through the Canadian wilds, her eyes left his face and met her husband's enlightened glance resting intently upon John's face. With a surprised exclamation she discerned a notable likeness in the faces of the two men—a noticeable resemblance in their build and carriage. John's gaze followed hers and took in the quiet gentleman who had so obviously been eavesdropping upon them. Quickly, Mrs. Marotté touched the young man's sleeve—

“John, my husband.”

The same thought ran through the mind of each of them and caused them to regard each

other with quickened pulses, shyly held in thrall by the immensity of their conception—checked by a new-born restraint and with the incredulous eyes of those about to prove the enchanted web that Fate has woven about them. Quietly and solemnly, Mr. Marotté sat down beside the other two. Question succeeded question and answer supplemented answer between them as they fitted together mentally the living blocks of the three different stories with ever-narrowing sureness and completeness.

By now Gretchen, missing them among the other guests, approached to find them. Struck by the rapt looks on their faces and their close intimacy of position for such a brief acquaintance, she gaped in wide-eyed wonder at the trio. Catching sight of her, Mrs. Marotté jumped to her feet, and, clasping her around the waist, covered her dumbfounded young face with smothering kisses, while John, in speechless awe and veneration, watched dumbly these three ideal beings so nearly bound to him by such endearing ties.

Both of the men had arisen on the same impulse.

“What—what has happened?” gasped Gretchen. “You—you frighten me!”

“Gretchen, dearest, do you know who this

young man is?" asked Mrs. Marrotté, sententially.

"I know only that he is *he*—John Manning—that is enough for me!"

"No! dear heart; he is *not* John Manning—he is *Eric Marotté!* our own long lost son! My mother-instinct has told me all along that he *could not* be dead!"

"My God! Francois, do you realize that this boy is our son—our son!—our long-mourned, never-forgotten baby?" And with a low, inarticulate, crooning cry, she flung herself upon the trembling boy, kissing his mouth and eyes and hair and hands with streaming tears and spasmodic sobbing—in a paroxysm of famished motherhood—a fierce gluttony of love regained.

John enfolded her close in his strong young arms, against his throbbing heart, and brokenly whispered softly and abashed: "*My mother*; at last!—Oh! God is good!"

Disengaging her still-clinging arms and placing her gently upon a chair, he wheeled about and grasped the other man's hand with his own in a grip that hurt.

"*Father*—my father! Can it be true!—Oh! don't deceive me! I could not stand it!"

Mr. Marotté ran his hands fondly through the boy's thick dark hair, and with his warm

lips set the seal of a father's recognition and long-hoarded love upon his forehead.

Gretchen crept closer, a great dread pulling at her heart-strings as she watched this pathetically glad, tremendously centered reunion, the three participants in which seemed to have no thought or recognition left for others around them. She experienced such a feeling as might engulf a lost soul, banished without the pale of Paradise and gazing with searéd eyeballs at the blessed souls within. A deadly pall of diffidence and doubt seemed to be enshrouding her. She did not speak—would John turn from her now in his new-found elevation of caste, he now heir to millions and she but the humble daughter of a German brewer? Ah! *she* had not turned away from *him* when her own star was in the ascendancy over his and he had believed himself a Negro! How true the bard who sang, "Love of man's life's a thing apart—'tis woman's whole existence!" As her thoughts thus led her blindly along through this "slough of despond," she swayed on her feet and clutched at the nearest arm—it was John's.

He swung round instantly and caught her in a tender embrace.

"Ah! little doubter, I can read your thoughts. Your eyes are an open book to me. Heart of my heart and soul of my soul shalt thou be for-

ever, 'Little Sunshine'—at last we're met no more to part!"

"Mother! father! this is the dear little woman who clung to me in spite of all that seemed against me; who has loved me always, and would have married me even knowing me to be a *Negro* except that I forbade the sacrifice. Kiss her lovingly and reverently for she will soon be your own adored daughter, and God has never made another like her." And, setting a "shining example" of his amorous admonition on her drooping eyelids and tempting lips, he handed her over to them.

The Christmas entertainment had gone on without intermission during the whole of this stirring and unusual scene, the rest of the "company" merely showing their polite curiosity by occasional sidelong looks and whispered questions addressed to each other *sotto voce*.

At Mrs. Hummelmüller's invitation "all hands" now began to gather about the closed door hiding the wonders of the Christmas tree, the unlading of which was to be done by Mr. Hummelmüller himself, who made a very chubby and nimble little Santa Claus in his full paraphernalia of "Saint Nick."

Soon the great folding doors were thrown back, and with shrieks of delight and wondering

admiration the children romped into the fairy chamber in advance of their elders. Everyone present had been remembered with some tasteful, amusing or useful gift, and paper wrappers and covers flew about as they undid the packages amid ejaculations of surprise and shouted thanks. Then came the Yule-tide supper and dance, and the short night wore away in unrestricted joys and happiness unconfined. The wonderful good news of John's discovery of and recovery by his true parents, was imparted to Gretchen's father and mother at the first opportunity, to their infinite astonishment and delight, and John hunted up Jim and Jemima and presented them to the Marottés, who filled them with a proud pleasure that did much to soften their deep sorrow over the coming parting with John they now knew must be, by their profuse and heart-disclosing thanks and felicitations for all they had done for their once fatherless and motherless boy. And even more by their promise that John would still regard them as his foster-parents and their enthusiastic predictions of his brilliant future in his new life. On the morrow the Marottés visited the Mannings' cottage home and were astounded at its comforts and refinements. The little, gold, ruby-set locket and the baby garments, found on John twenty-one years before, were shown them, and

they recognized them at once, thus making John's identification perfect and complete, irrefragable and beyond all peradventure.

Mrs. Marotté wept over the cruel note in the locket, and it was destroyed there and then. They dined there at noon with the Mannings, Gretchen and John and enjoyed it immensely—the latter two so happy they could scarcely eat at all. Sudden happiness, like great grief, destroys the appetite.

For several days afterwards John's two mothers met continually at one house or the other, and Mrs. Marotté never grew tired of hearing Jemima's wonderful stories of John's babyhood, childhood and youthful life and precosities, which she, his rightful mother, had so sadly missed.

At breakfast on New Year's morning, Jim found a letter addressed to him lying beside his plate on the dining-room table where Jemima had placed it. It had arrived by special delivery during Jim's absence from the house the night before, and John, who was partly in its secret, had earnestly requested Jemima not to let his foster-father see it till the New Year, as it might, very probably, contain a present intended for that day. Breakfast was ready early, and both John and Jemima had taken their seats at the table before Jim came in and

noticed the letter waiting there. The latter sat down at the head of their modest "board" and picked up the envelope. He put on his spectacles and read the superscription over several times in some perplexity.

"Hello! what's this?" he exclaimed, looking over the top of his glasses at the others, inquiringly. "Some fellow must be in a prodigious hurry to collect his monthly bill of me—I wonder who it can be—sent by special delivery, too!"

He broke the seal with his table knife and drew out a tinted and scented double sheet of fine paper bearing a lozenged crest. Readjusting his glasses, he read aloud, while John "smiled on" knowingly and Jemima sat listening, open-mouthed and flustered by all this mystery. The contents of the enclosed note were as follows:

"Chicago, January 1, 19—.

"Dear Friends and Benefactors:

"May we beg that the foster-parents of our son, John Manning, will accept from the parents of our son, Eric Marotté, with their sincerest gratitude and loving remembrance, this slight memento of our thanks for and heartfelt appreciation of their noble guardianship of the boy we each so dearly love?

"François Marotté,

"Marie Ingeborg Ericsson Marotté,
Mr. and Mrs. James Manning."

Jim removed his spectacles and clandestinely dabbed his eyes with his napkin, pretending the

glasses hurt him. A flood of half sad, half rejoicing, reveries dimmed the eyes of his wife. John looked unsatisfied.

"Hand me that envelope for a minute, father," said he. He held it up to the light of the window.

"Yes, there's another enclosure in it," he mused, handing it back. Jim mechanically inserted his thumb and index finger in the envelope and pulled forth the second, single, sheet enclosed. He put on his glasses again and slowly unfolded it, smoothing out its creases with his big hand. As he perused its face he started in sudden astonishment, then silently passed it with an unsteady hand to Jemima.

It was a check on the Bank of Montreal drawn to the joint order of himself and his wife for twenty-two thousand dollars—one thousand dollars for each and every year of John's young life, up to the time he became, in practice, as he had always been in fact, **Eric Marotté**.

CHAPTER XX.

PERORATION



IT was long before his old friends could get used to his change of appellation. Eric had many deeply interesting and significant talks with his new-found father and mother between Christmas and New Years, as they had so much to tell each other, and such an experience was so rare that they could hardly become tired of it quickly. He learned that his father, Francois Marotté, was a descendant of a Bourbon *émigré* who had fled to Canada during a French *émeut*é that threatened both his life and his estates. That his mother was the granddaughter, on her mother's side, of one of the foremost poets and philosophers of the Scandinavian literati, who had died possessed of little else except undying fame and the consciousness of leaving the literature and hearts of his countrymen greatly enriched and expanded by the genius of his life.

Mr. and Mrs. Marotté were inordinately proud of their son's well-earned achievements and success and yet more greatly set up by his unlooked-for refinement and cultivation and educational proficiency. They saw that they

could scarcely have done better by him themselves than he had, without their aid, been equal to doing for himself; nor could they have chosen or imagined a truer and more charming bride for him than Gretchen. Blood had told.

Eric's engagement to Gretchen was immediately announced, and, as the latter had never been a *débutante* at a regular "coming out" party, the Hummelmuelers decided to give instead a "betrothal ball" for her and Eric at Chicago's most fashionable dancing academy, located on the South side in the vicinity of Twenty-third street and Lake Michigan.

This, the most important event of that social season, came off on the last day of the year, as a sort of poetic farewell to old conditions and greeting to the new. The account of Eric's change of fortune and name had spread rapidly over the city before the date of the ball, and, true to their ingrained, natural instincts and breeding, all the prigs and snobs and cads of society who had so recently and deliberately turned their backs on him as John Manning, the alleged illegitimate Negro foundling, now, with admirable *volte-face*, fell over each other (metaphorically speaking) in their ridiculous efforts to ingratiate or re-establish themselves in the good graces of Eric Marotté, the heir-presumptive millionaire and the affianced hus-

band of the most beautiful girl in Chicago, heiress to still other millions.

When, on the night of the ball itself, Eric lead Gretchen from the ladies' dressing quarters into the great dancing hall with its wax-polished floor and hanging balconies and its artificial candle-light, there was an instant craning of necks and rustling of skirts and skirmishing for vantage points from which to view the two most talked about young people of the season; and as they crossed the length of the room and came slowly back, arm in arm, to their station with the host and hostess at the main entrance to the floor, so striking was their appearance and manner that this assemblage of the "flower of Chicago's aristocracy" almost *applauded*.

Then, two by two, as the animals went into old Noah's ark, a continuous line of couples passed by them to make their best devoirs and to meet, with mingled curiosity and respect, the respective parents of the hero and heroine of Chicago's greatest and most baffling historical romance.

Gretchen wore décolleté for the first time, and her beautifully-rounded, evenly-fleshed bare arms and shoulders gleamed dully like those of a Galatean marble quickening to the breath of love, their color slightly tinged and vastly beautified by that extremely captivating, evanescent,

underlying flush so rarely seen in tawny skins. Her heavy red-gold hair, the despair of "coif-furers" and the envy of every female heart, was parted over the centre of her cool, broad forehead with its perfect eyebrows, and held in two massive waves by an unjeweled chaplet of dull gold leaves, from which it was drawn back, partly concealing her lobeless ears, and fell thence in three long, unbraided locks, two of them brought forward under her ears and falling over her tantalizing shoulders, the other trailing down her back.

She was robed in a loose and flowing Empire ball-gown of deep-crimson velvet with regal train, that accentuated her unusual stature, and the opening of which rested below each of her shoulders in a Rococo line of equal height at back and front, its upper edge trimmed with a wide, oriental-looking and irregularly outlined border of dull pink and pearl, which gave the needed relief of worked design to the gown's rich simplicity. She wore no jewels at all.

Eric had never seen her so surpassingly lovely. Her wide-set, fawnlike eyes between which the bridge of her very slightly retroussé nose widened and flattened upward to form its perfectly curved union with her eyebrows, a union as true as that of the Venus of Milo; her delicately chiseled nostrils above a cherry lip

like Cupid's bow; her strong, round chin and the slightly flattened oval of her jaws; her wonderful teeth that dazzled like an ever-changing vision; the firm, round domes of her bosom rising and falling in maddening semi-view below her full, clear throat and tapering neck; her queenly grace and carriage; her heavenly smile—all these helped to give to her a *tout ensemble* resistless to every sense of love, of beauty, and of passion.

Later in the evening, Eric remarked to his new mother, half ruefully, half humorously, that "it was lucky for him that he 'saw her first' and had already appropriated her; for in twenty-four hours more she would have had the whole male population of the town at her feet and he would have had the fight of his life on his hands."

Eric himself was, fortunately, one of that small minority of men who wear full-dress like conventionalized gods, instead of appearing in it like so many "Bully Bottoms" in some modernized, mortal *Midsummer Night's Dream*; and his former premature *dignity* of sorrow was now replaced by the nobler dignity of love.

Madly infatuated with her as Gretchen knew him to be, she yet looked askance at the ill-concealed glances of approval with which the rival beauties tried to catch his eye.

The "ball" rolled on to the airs of waltz and two-step (this was before the decadent days of the "turkey-trot," the "grizzly bear" and the "tango") and the muffled sound of busy spoons and forks; and so the old year, with all its heart-burnings and exciting changes, passed away forever, and the new year dawned, amidst jangling bells and tooting horns and screaming whistles, with a promise in it all their own for Eric and Gretchen.

Mr. and Mrs. Marotté wished the marriage to take place while they were in Chicago, so they could carry the bride and groom home with them to Canada for their honeymoon. And as a long engagement was out of the question anyhow, under the circumstances of the "affinceds'" already perfect understanding of each other and long waiting for so many years back, the nuptial ceremony was set for the day, January seventh, approaching, just one week "after the ball was over."

Deeming the publicity gained and the opportunity given society to greet the young lovers already sufficient for the amenities, the consensus of family opinions was that the wedding should be a simple home affair, with only relatives and a few intimate and old friends present, especially as another reception was awaiting the bridal party among the friends of the

Marotté's in Montreal. It was arranged that immediately after the wedding breakfast, Gretchen was to don her traveling costume and depart with Eric and her father-and-mother-in-law for their Canadian home.

The ceremony was celebrated at high-noon of the day appointed; and as Eric and Gretchen stood together before the officiating man of God called to confirm this "marriage made in Heaven," and answered the momentous questions and took the solemn oaths of this most impressive service of the church; all who watched them vowed them to be the handsomest bridal couple they had ever seen. With many fond and tearful adieux and loving parting wishes and commands, the Marottés, who had come as two and now went forth as four in number, were escorted to the two waiting limousines, and whirled in them to the railway station, the two "bereaved" families following them in the Hummelmuellers' "coach and two." More laughter, tears, embraces, kisses, and the long length of the "Limited Express" "pulled out," serpentineing through the train-yard amidst the waving of handkerchiefs and the last, long, lingering looks of love.

That night, alone together in the state-room of the palatial "sleeper" northward bound, Eric

and Gretchen reached the *acme* of their happiness, so long deferred.

* * * * *

And here I reach the climax of my story, and turn out the light.

For, he who still proceeds beyond the climax of his tale, goes down, not up, the long, weary hill of entertainment, in but a vain endeavor.

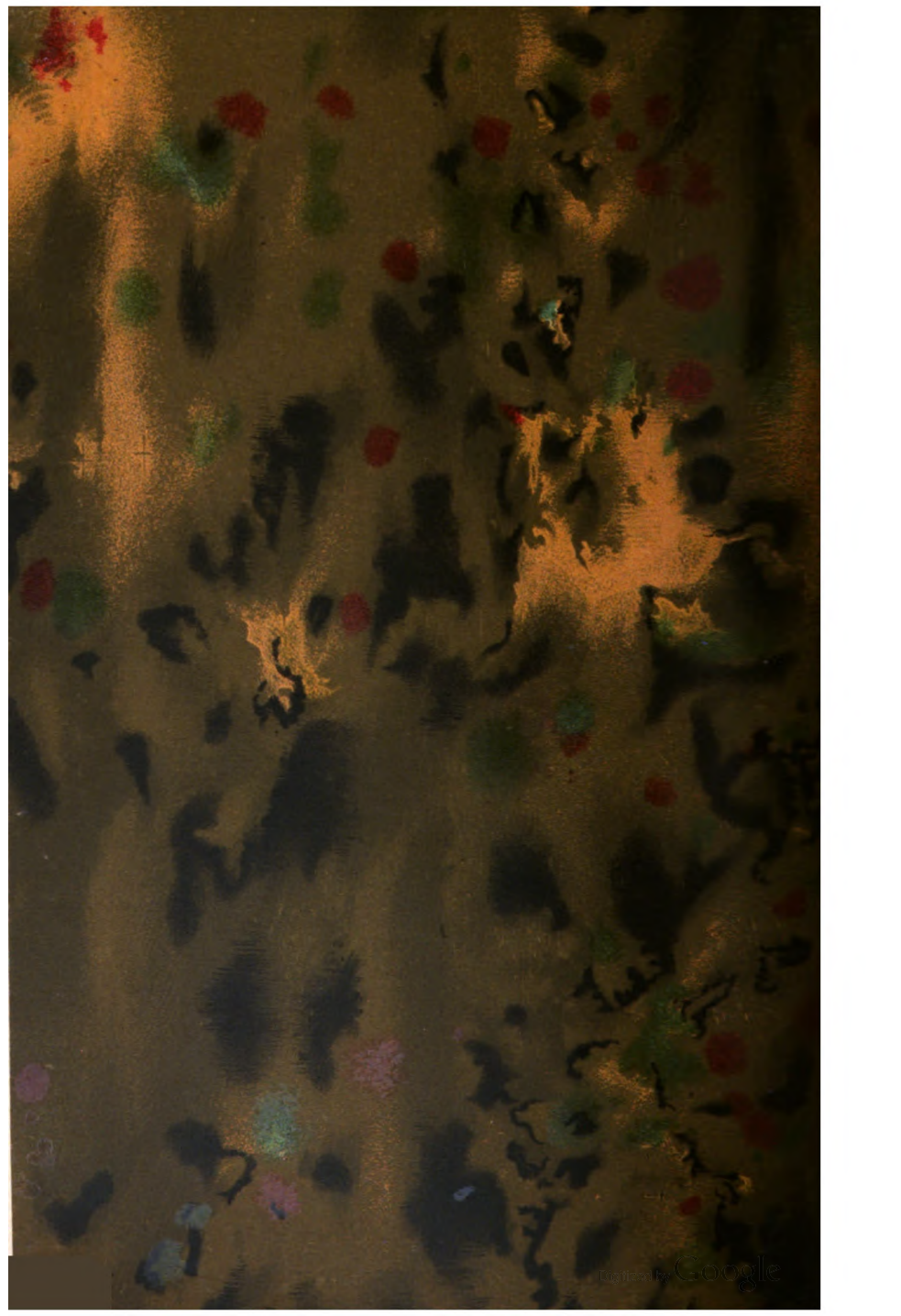
Napoleon said at St. Helena, "I should have died at Waterloo!"

And if any reader deems the characters, plot and incidents herein depicted and recorded, lacking in verisimilitude and fecundity, or in essentials of the higher form of fiction; let the disappointed one reconcile these things as best he can; but remember, that I could not make them otherwise if I would, *because the story's true to life*, and I am simply the historian.

As to the *motif* of the book, I have read somewhere, "It is the mission of all literature worth while, to express the aspiration of the century in which the author lives and has his being, towards a higher and juster social life; towards the gradual coming of God's kingdom on earth—when His Will shall at last be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

AND FURTHER DEPONENT SAITH NOT.

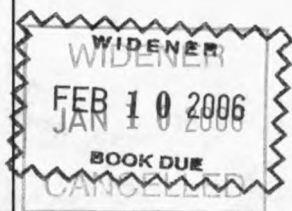
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